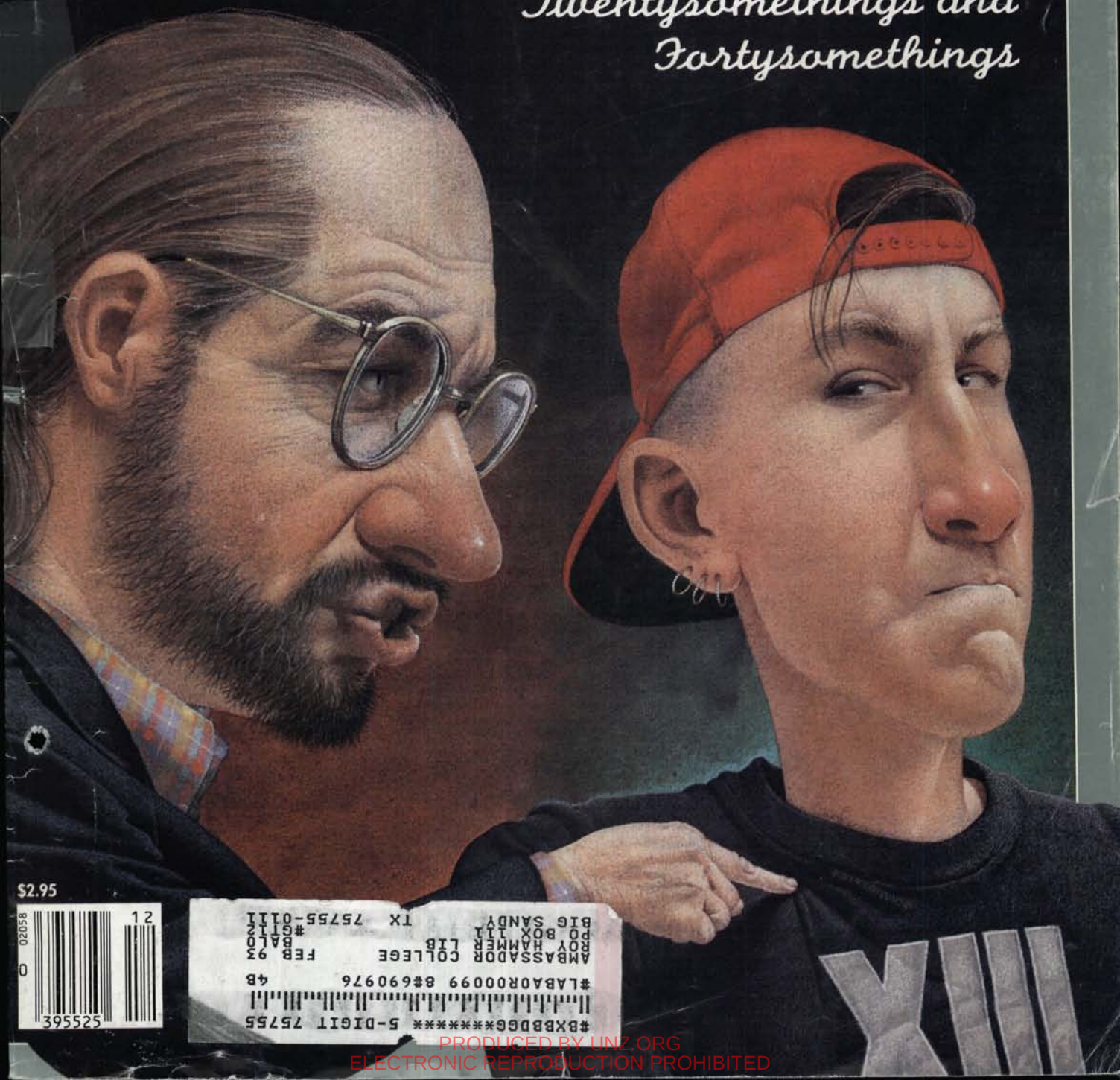


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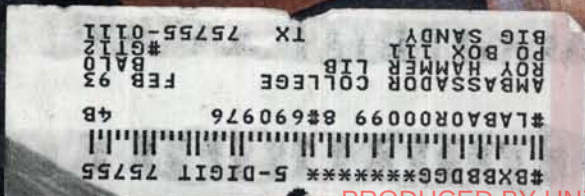
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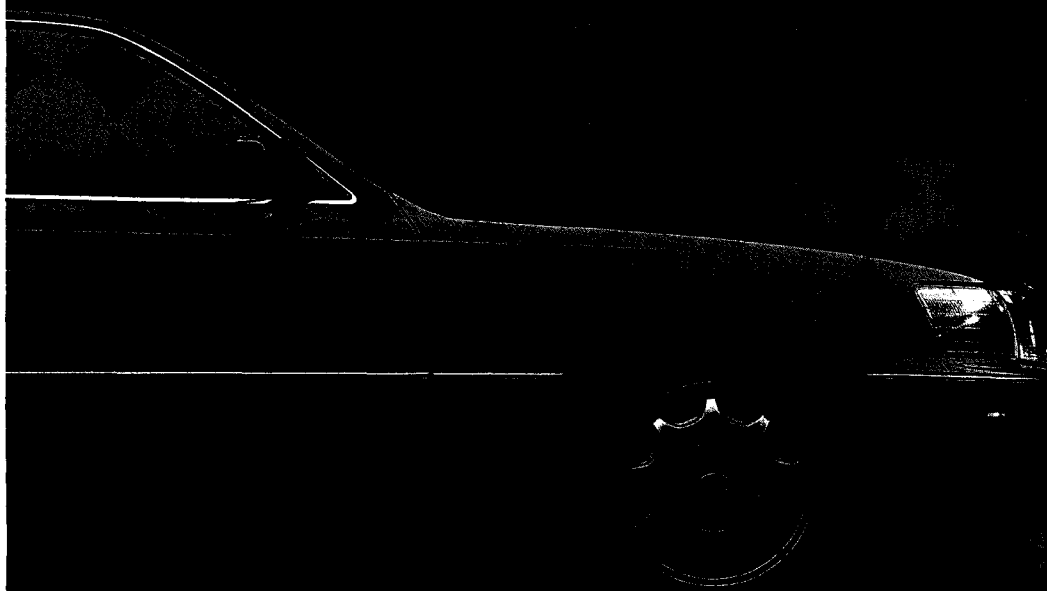
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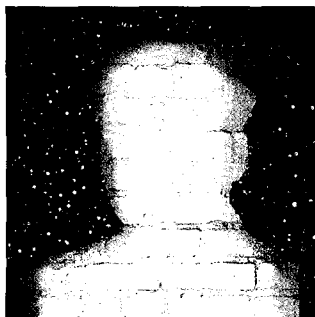


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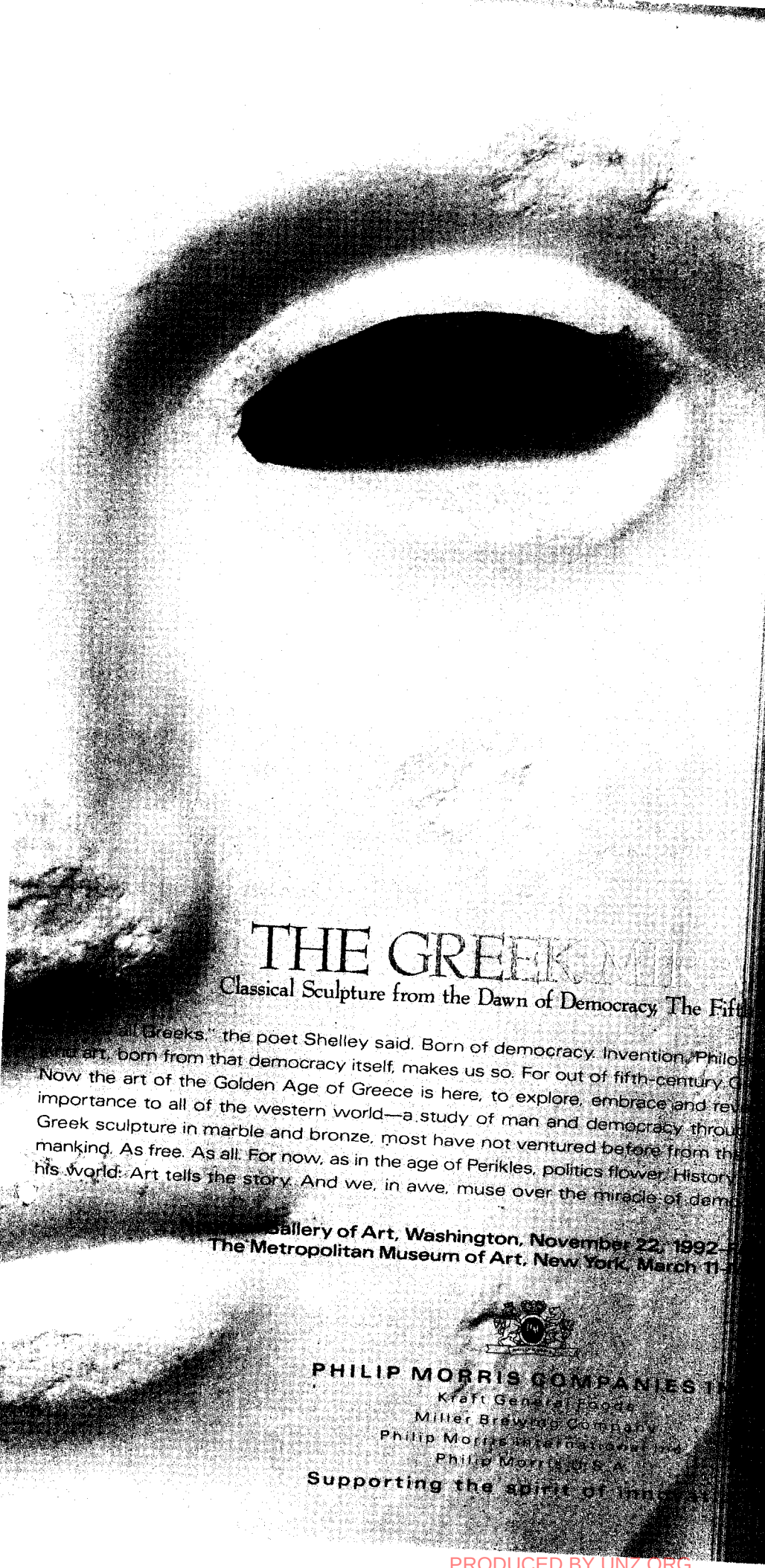




The Kritios Boy, (detail), 480-470 BC., marble,
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THANKS TO Charles Portis's "Nights Can Turn Cool in Viborra," in this issue, we now know much about a new all-but-time-forgotten city. Readers of Portis's fourth novel, *Masters of Atlantis*, are also well acquainted with the secret order of Gnomons, who preserve ancient sciences and extraordinary hats. (One modern-day adept of Gnomonism is the sublimely named Sydney Hen.)

Of Portis himself not much is known. You will not see him at writers' conferences or in promotional appearances. It has been established that he served as a Marine in the Korean War, graduated from the University of Arkansas, worked as a reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *New York Herald-Tribune*, resigned his post as the *Trib's* London bureau chief in 1964 to become a free-lance writer, resides now in Little Rock, has never married, frequently drives down to Mexico, and is the author of five novels.

The second novel, *True Grit*, was a deservedly enormous best seller and the basis of the movie that won John Wayne his only Oscar. But the first novel, *Norwood*, is the text reread most often by Portis devotees, who say things like, "The way I decided whether to marry my wife: I gave her

Norwood and waited. And then I heard her laughing upstairs."

The third novel, *Dog of the South*, has this elegant premise: a man goes on the road to track down his car and his wife and her boyfriend along the trail of the receipts enclosed in the bills they have incurred on his credit cards. Of the aforementioned fourth, a reviewer in the *Los Angeles Times* (me, actually) exclaimed, "*Masters of Atlantis* sustains intense ludicrousness so calmly—so *dis-tractedly*, almost—that I have just now thrown my hat in the air, thinking about it." The fifth, *Gringos* (an excerpt from which appeared in *The Atlantic* last year), involves UFO sightings and a Mayan temple.

None of which should leave the impression that Portis's craft is exotic. With somewhat the exception of our guide in Viborra, a Portis narrator has a luminously everyday, hands-on frame of reference. A friend of Portis's recalls sitting with the man outdoors:

"He didn't say anything for an hour, it seemed like, just looking up the road, and then he indicated a construction worker in the distance and said, 'Look at that scutter work.'" An attentive reader of Portis's fiction will make that same observation of the author. —ROY BLOUNT JR.



A Charles Portis creation

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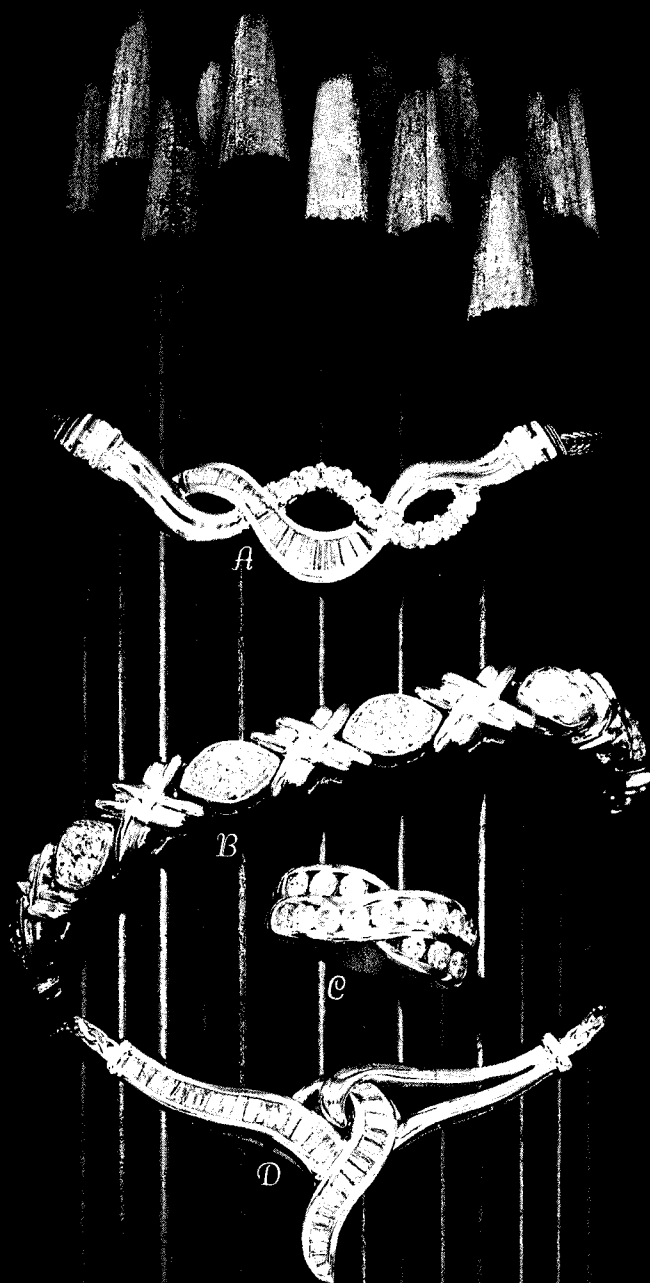
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PROBLEM ADOPTIONS

God bless Katharine Davis Fishman for "Problem Adoptions" (September *Atlantic*). For years we were led to believe that we were somehow inadequate because we could not convince the severely abused child we adopted at age nine that she could trust us unconditionally. We went through thousands of dollars and dozens of so-called therapists (many inside the adoption system) who insisted that our daughter's problems were our fault.

We loved her too much, they said, and she couldn't handle the pressure, or we didn't love her enough and she felt abandoned, and so on. Every time we sought help, we got guilt instead. It was a horrible experience, and only our determination and love for our daughter got us through it at all.

My husband is a psychologist who specializes in post-traumatic-stress disorder. But whenever we suggested PTSD-related problems in our adopted daughter, we were encouraged to focus instead on our own inadequacies.

Finally we found a clinician who helped us develop a realistic parenting strategy that led to our removing our daughter from our home but staying involved in her life in specialized treatment. He said he was amazed at how strong we were. I cried, knowing we weren't cruel or crazy after all.

Our daughter, now twenty-one, starts junior college this fall, majoring in social work. I have sent her your outstanding article. Maybe, if she chooses adoption problems as a treatment specialty, adoptive parents and their children will have at least one more empathic, intuitive therapist to help them in future years.

Thanks for helping confirm my sanity and getting me back in touch with my own correct intuition as a mother. It will help me a lot, since we just adopted a two-year-old son.

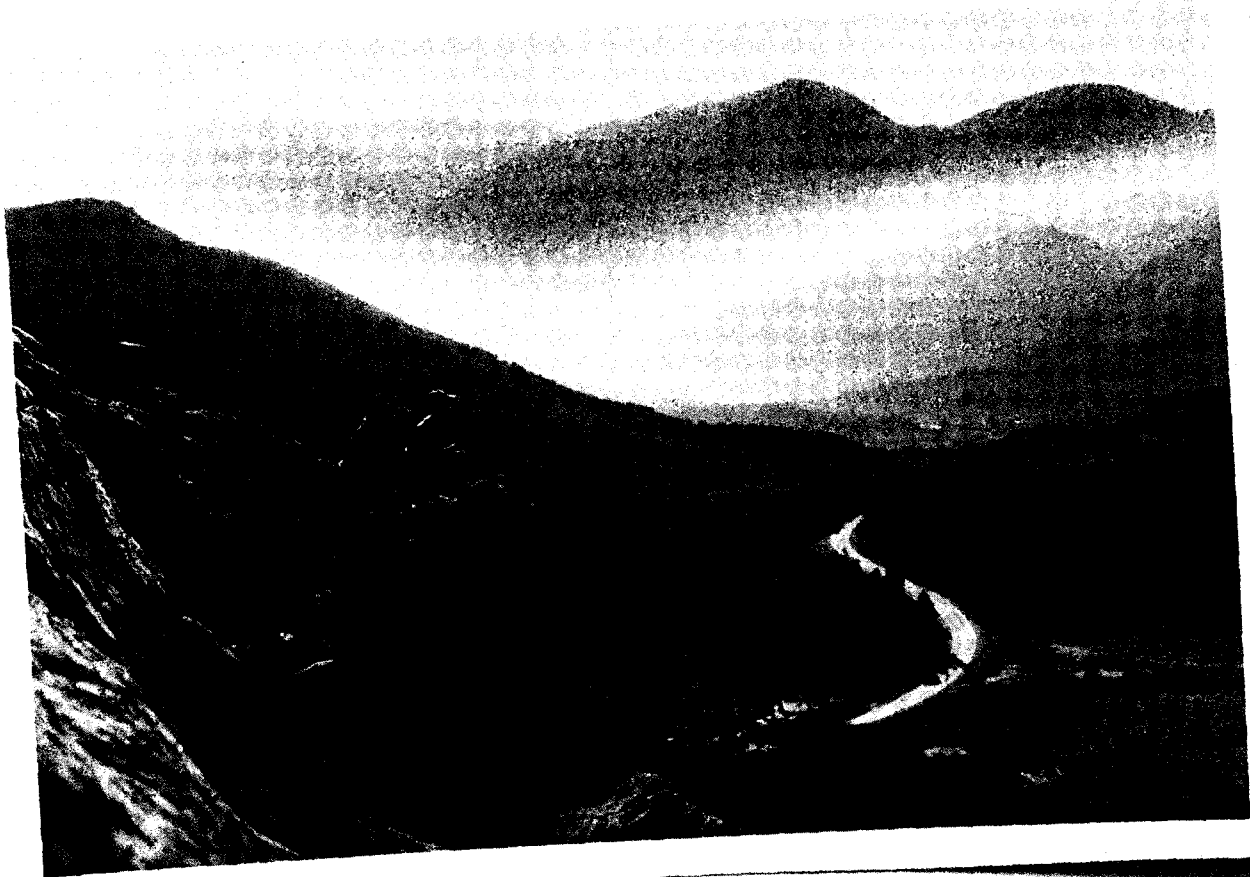
BARBARA MORAN
El Cajon, Calif.

Katharine Davis Fishman describes a number of personality problems and family stresses familiar to many of us who have lived with adoptive and foster children. When my husband and I decided to become foster parents, we considered ourselves realistic. Ours was a second marriage, and we had dealt with the adjustments of stepchildren. We had hosted foreign students. While I was single, I had provided a home for unwed mothers and for a boy from Japan whose adoptive parents had died. I was a junior high school teacher, and had worked with many troubled children.

Joy, one of my students, was in need of a home. She had been in a foster home but was now in a receiving home while her caseworker sought a new foster family. She had been sent to and returned by several families. Yet she functioned reasonably well at school, and we hoped that we could stop the slide into delinquency that was taking place. We did not expect appreciation. Appreciation of parents comes later in life. We did anticipate that our new daughter would bond with us eventually, and we would have a natural family experience. Instead, we learned that we had to adjust to living with Joy, because she had learned to withstand all efforts to integrate her into a family.

The child-protective services were delighted with our offer to take Joy. After a few years we realized that was all they wanted: someone to take the child so that they could close their case. They lied to us about her history, hid vital information about her former psychiatric problems and treatment, and gave us none of the help we needed and asked for. We were simply left to our own inadequate devices during the episodes of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and the periods of separation distress. When we called the caseworker, he would come out, listen to Joy's pleas for placement elsewhere, agree to find her another place, and

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then tell us that she would stay with us—and assure us she was having normal teenage problems.

We had other foster children at this time, two on a permanent basis. Joy bonded with them, as she did with our natural children, but she walled out any intimacy with us, and periodically went on rampages of hate and rejection. During her junior year in high school she seemed finally to have made a place for herself at school and at home, after our long struggle to give her "experiences that made her feel successful"—and then she ran away. I have never recovered from that heart-break, and the fear of what might happen to her. She refused to come home when she was found, lived with a different foster family for a while, and eventually returned to us when she was eighteen and Family Services was no longer responsible for her. She has been in and out of our lives since, sometimes disappearing for years. She has been married and divorced. She is a mother—this woman who cannot endure any degree of intimacy or love. I still grieve over her loss, and wonder if her life might have been different if we had had the kind of help described in "Problem Adoptions."

NAME WITHHELD

I know from experience that everything included in "Problem Adoptions" is right on. I needed the information it provided when we took in our first foster child. I needed it even more when we adopted our last two foster children. We are one of the "successful" families. Our children, now fourteen and fifteen, are still with us after six very difficult years.

We have experienced many of the behaviors described in the article. Our son has been into fire-setting, stealing, self-destruction, and property destruction. Our daughter has lied, stolen, and wet the bed for years. Both still throw tantrums and try to abuse us in minor irritating ways. In trying to deal with these problems my husband and I often cannot decide the source of the behaviors. We frequently question whether we are doing something wrong. Is their behavior normal for children of their ages? We have worked with psychologists, caseworkers, and doctors. All have had the attitudes exemplified by the Downey Side workers and parents described in the article.

Katharine Davis Fishman made me realize that my husband and I are dealing with the problems of four families during the times of crisis. Our children were physically and emotionally abused by their birth parents, who relinquished their parental rights when the children were three and four years old. The children were placed in foster care with a second family who, we think, cared for them well, but were not able to handle the "acting out" behaviors. An adoptive family was found. These people physically, emotionally, and sexually abused the children for the two and a half years before they were returned to foster care and came to live with us. Just a review of these bare facts makes me wonder why we have any good days with our son and daughter. But we do.

JANET M. SCHROCK
San Francisco, Calif.

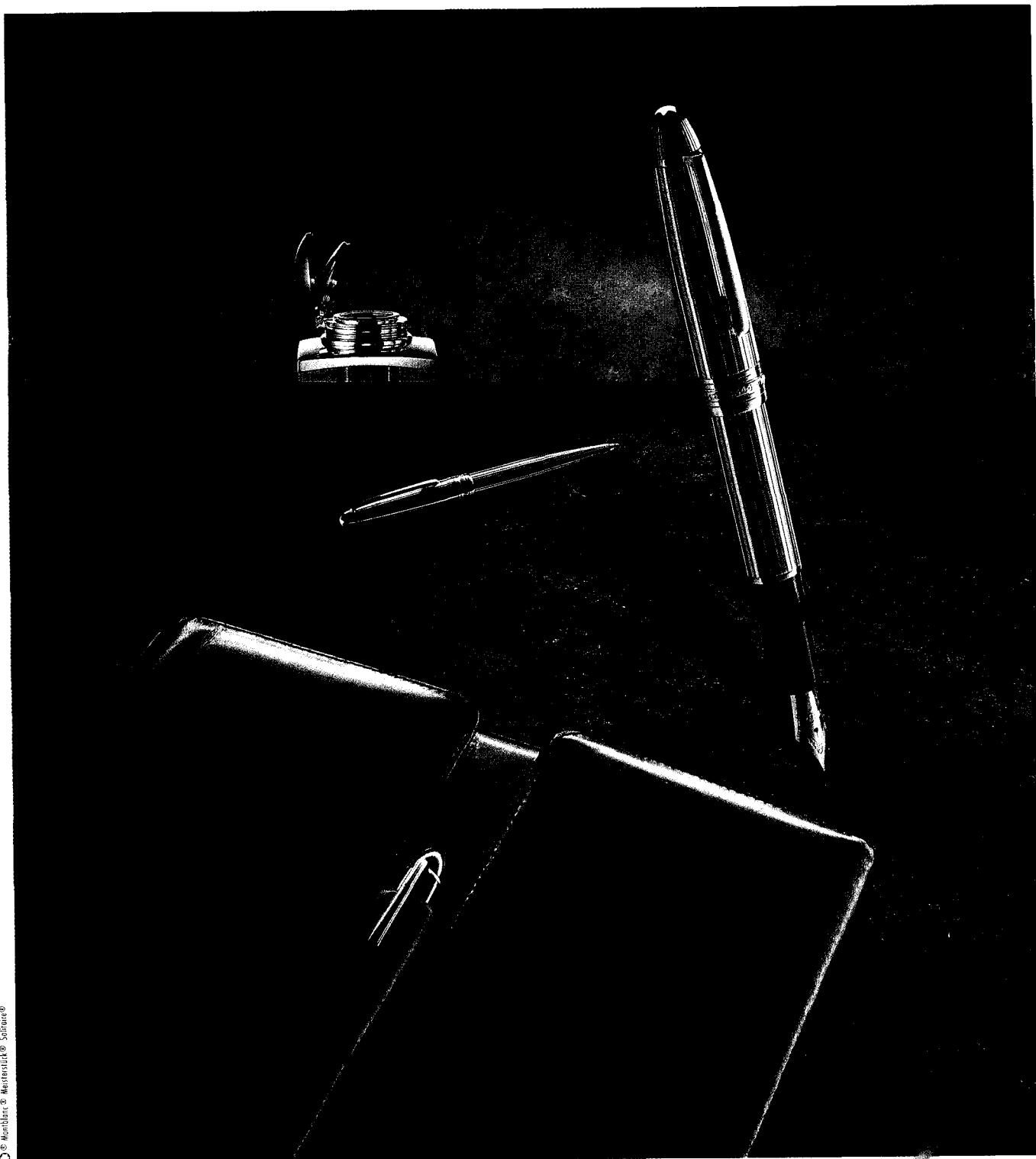
In 1972, when our agency dismantled its "healthy white baby" placement service and chose special-needs children as our focus and priority, we pretty much believed that love could conquer all. We knew that prospective adoptive parents needed to be educated and trained, but we also counted a lot on love and good nutrition as being the factors that could "bring the kids around."

With two decades and 2,231 placements behind us (or, rather, still with us, as the agency's commitment must be lifelong as well!), we know that some children cannot live in families but must have connections to a family if they are to survive. At TLS we seek the few good families who can sign on to be therapeutic parents and expect little in return.

BARBARA HOLTAN
*Director of Adoptions
Tressler Lutheran Services
York, Pa.*

"Problem Adoptions" is something of a problem for those of us concerned with adopted children and their families.

Katharine Fishman correctly notes that children and parents who do well with one another usually experience a "goodness of fit," and that it is necessary for "parental expectations" to be adjusted to meet what the child does (or does not) deliver. This analysis of parent-child relations, of course, ap-



The art of writing

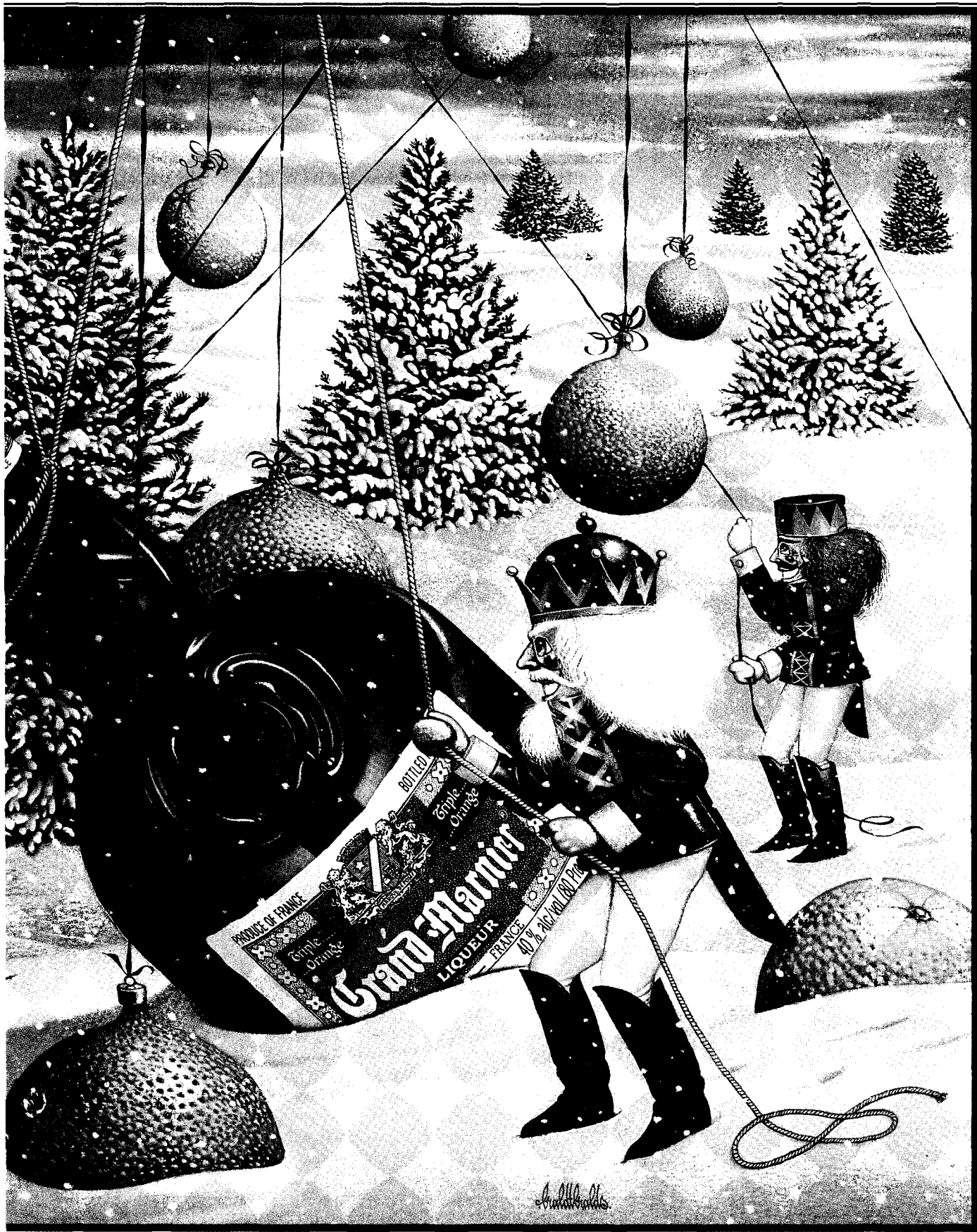
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plies to all families, whether the children are adopted or not.

However, with specific regard to families with adopted children, Fishman says that adoption "always carries its own complications" (emphasis added). My professional and personal experience suggests that this is an overstatement.

Data from longitudinal outcome studies and comparative studies (of nonadopted children and adopted children placed early in infancy) have shown *no* significant differences between adopted and nonadopted children with regard to social and emotional development. In fact, in 1969 the American Psychiatric Association stated that comparisons of random samples of adopted and nonadopted children showed no evidence of greater emotional disturbance or psychopathology among the adopted children.

LYNN FRIEDMAN KESSLER
Van Nuys, Calif.

Katharine Davis Fishman quotes the first pages of our book *On Adoption and Disruption: Rates, Risks, and Responses*, in which we refer to early (and rather uncomplicated) research indicating that somewhere between four percent and 40 percent of special-needs adoptions disrupt. We provide these figures to clarify the need for more-definitive research on adoption outcomes and to explain the value of our study. Had she read further, she would have learned that we found an 11 percent disruption rate for special-needs adoptions. Had she endured to the book's end, she would have learned that several other major studies in the past five years had confirmatory findings. *Atlantic* readers should know that in nearly nine out of ten older-child adoptions, a permanent family is created. Although very troubling outcomes sometimes occur, these are not common. For the most part adoption yields extraordinary and lasting benefits to parents and children alike. The reader of Fishman's serious article might have missed that very important point. Serious readers of the adoption-outcome research would not. Nor would children who experience the satisfactions of living in a forever family.

RICHARD P. BARTH
Berkeley, Calif.
MARIANNE BERRY
Arlington, Texas

Katharine Davis Fishman replies:

Barbara Moran's story shows that parents who are treated honestly and with compassion (as by that one clinician) may well adopt again, and TLS's attitude, described by Barbara Holtan, sounds wonderful.

Lynn Kessler appears not to have actually read my article. For example, I wrote, "A few emotional challenges are inherent in the experience of being raised outside the family one was born to and . . . many more may come from one's history before the adoption. Knowing which are which is crucial." I also wrote, "Most of the time adoption is a joyous experience. . . ." It is always possible but hardly constructive to fight a duel of statistics; I stand by mine. Finally, professionals' unreasonable fear of families' being led down the road of self-fulfilling prophesy is what causes them to lead families down the equally perilous path of naiveté and romanticism.

Despite the overall disruption rate they cite, the figures in Richard Barth and Marianne Berry's book—from their own and other studies—do vary widely among subgroups according to the child's age and previous history, the characteristics of the adoptive family, and the practices of the agency. But that is somewhat beside the point, since none of the cases I described in detail involved disruptions; on the contrary, they are the "forever" families that Barth and Berry would count as success stories. While quantitative analysis is certainly necessary in framing a problem, it serves—perhaps conveniently—to cover up a lot of human misery.

SEMPER ANXIUS

"Semper Anxious," by Michael Wright (September *Atlantic*), while informative and making several relevant points about the future of the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense, has some factual errors leading to erroneous conclusions.

Wright's observations of the two amphibious Marine expeditionary brigades (MEB) are incorrect on two counts. First, the fact that the two brigades, which form less than one division, held at bay six Iraqi divisions by the threat of an amphibious assault is in itself a sound use of the fighting forces—not, as implied, a waste. Second, the



5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, from Camp Pendleton, California, of which I was a member, deployed ashore during the morning hours of the first day of ground operations and proved a viable fighting force during action in support of and in conjunction with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. Although it is true that the landing was unopposed, the 5th MEB proved its expeditionary abilities by landing all its troops, follow-on support, and required supplies, and was in action within twenty-four hours of landing the first troops ashore.

Your article also mentions the Army's outstanding performance during the Gulf War. Although no one will deny the impressive performance of the Army's units, their use as a Rapid Deployment Force is highly speculative. Although the 82nd Airborne Division was the first unit on the ground, it found itself without much of their heavier equipment and no sustainability. Most of the initial sustainment of Army forces came from the ships of the Marine Corps' Maritime Prepositioning Force, including food, water, ammunition, and repair parts.

The Army performed the mission it was designed for—fighting a sustained land battle after having the time to establish itself in the area. The Marine Corps also performed its mission, by providing an immediate, viable, and sustainable delaying force, allowing the Army time to build and prepare. It may be true that the age of frontal assault across the beach, as seen in the Second World War, is over, but the ability to deploy rapidly, combined with sustainability, provided by Marine expeditionary units of all sizes, is still and will continue to be a sound form of deterrent and projection of force.

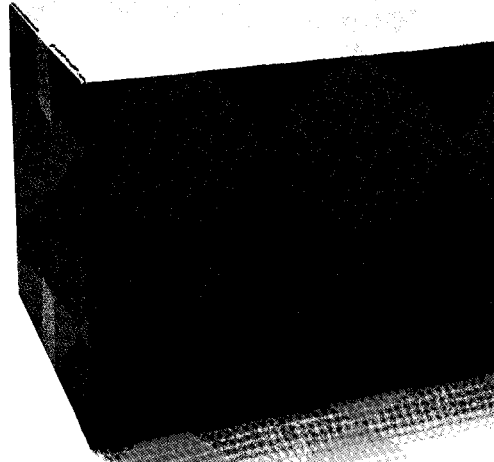
J. A. WOODSTOCK

*Commanding Officer, U.S. Marine Corps
Twentynine Palms, Calif.*

After reading "Semper Anxious," I am frustrated to think how close Michael Wright came—to writing an accurate story. He was scheduled to meet with us here in March to gather information for his story. We offered to reschedule to accommodate him, but he ultimately canceled, citing a "pressing deadline" as the reason. Too bad.

T. V. DRAUDE

*Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps
Washington, D.C.*



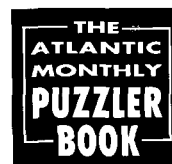
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I disagree with Michael Wright's implication that the future of the Marine Corps will depend heavily on a roll-call vote by former Marines who are now in Congress. The Marine Corps is a public institution that serves at the pleasure of the American people, and its future is secure as long as it remains a superb combat force and an essential element of our national military strategy.

I am surprised that Wright would describe as technical the vast differences between operational and administrative chains of command. As any professional military officer knows, the duties and responsibilities within these chains are quite dissimilar. For Beirut I was in the administrative, not operational, chain of command, and during congressional hearings so stated when asked questions that could be answered accurately only by commanders in the operational chain.

Rather than relying exclusively on comments made by one of my two most notorious critics—both of whom like to think of themselves as “defense experts” and have long-standing personal axes to grind—to measure my relations with Congress during my stewardship as commandant, Wright might have considered a more objective yardstick—performance. Among other things, I pioneered and won legislative approval for the Maritime Prepositioning Ship program that was so widely acclaimed during Operation Desert Storm, and during my term the Marine Corps experienced an unprecedented equipment-modernization program. Both of these were made possible with funds appropriated from a very supportive Congress.

Wright's *ad hominem* reference to my post-retirement political activity in behalf of our Commander-in-Chief has no relevance whatsoever to the theme of his article. Many military persons, however, have become politically active in retirement, including several former Presidents and a number of current members of Congress. I am humbled that Wright includes me in this prestigious group.

P. X. KELLEY
General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
Arlington, Va.

Michael Wright misleads the reader on two key points. First, in discussing the power-projection missions, he states that “since the demise of the

Warsaw Pact several Army divisions have shed heavy equipment and become as expeditionary as anything in the Marine Corps.” If by “expeditionary” he means the ability to deploy for “show the flag” missions, he may be right. But if called on to fight, Army quick-response units (the 82nd and the 101st) are woefully lacking in firepower and—the key area—sustainability.

Marine forces afloat bring with them the logistics and firepower to conduct thirty days of combat operations ashore. Army crisis-response units carry individual weapons and the contents of the packs on their backs—nothing more. This is far from being a credible power-projection capability.

Second, in referring to the employment of Marine forces in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, he implies that the Army had a great Gulf War, while Marine amphibious groups off Kuwait were bit players, “left bobbing in the Gulf” as decoys. In developing their concept of operations, USCENTCOM planners employed classic maneuver-warfare doctrine, placing the enemy on the horns of a dilemma. By forcing the Iraqi defenders to deal with the very credible offshore threat posed by two Marine expeditionary brigades, General Schwartzkopf and his staff gained critical additional time to build sufficient force structure along the Kuwait-Saudi border, the area from which the main attack would be delivered.

Wright fails to mention one key point that was abundantly clear to all those “bobbing” Marines: should the breach of the berm on land along the Kuwait-Saudi border not go as planned, they would be employed in flanking the main attack—shallow minefield or not. Realizing this, General Schwartzkopf displayed the wisdom with which he has been so widely credited and gave the critical berm-breaching mission to the units he knew wouldn't fail him—leathernecks of the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions.

P. T. CASEY
Major, U.S. Marine Corps
Sagamihara, Japan

Michael Wright replies:

I had assumed that my piece would draw a withering barrage from the Marine Corps or from its alumni. But I had hoped that Corps defenders would go substantially beyond those old, dog-eared arguments that (1) there should

always be a Marine Corps because there has always been a Marine Corps, (2) only Marines are institutionally capable of getting from here to there on ships, and (3) the Army just can't hack it.

General Draude appears to regard my inability to keep a particular appointment—thereby missing a rendering of the commandant's don't-gut-the-Corps briefing—as a watershed event. I don't think so. Independently, I had obtained a highly detailed, richly illustrated copy of the briefers' script.

I can assure General Kelley that my reporting didn't start and stop with a single source. I have, I believe, accurately portrayed the general's reputation around the Corps.

Major Casey makes much of “sustainability.” True, the first planeloads of Army troops had to scramble for supplies. But then, as the Desert Shield buildup progressed, the lightly armored Marine ground forces had to scrounge for heavy tanks, first from the British and then from, ahem, the U.S. Army. So who was more sustainable?

TALES FROM THE BAZAAR

Robert Kaplan, the author of your article (“Tales From the Bazaar,” August *Atlantic*) on Arabists in the Foreign Service, including me, misrepresented his purpose for wanting to interview me concerning this article. At the outset of the first of our two meetings Kaplan stated that he wanted only to examine the backgrounds of Foreign Service Arabists and that the article would have no political content. This proves not to be the case; the article is indeed politicized, especially with regard to me.

As for the article in its entirety, Kaplan makes the Arabists—particularly me—look like a bunch of romantics, thus perpetuating a false popular image. I would contend, on the contrary, that Arabists have been pragmatic, realistic, and issue-oriented. They have been guided in their judgments and recommendations by a commitment to the national interests of the United States, not by romanticism.

The article, unfairly, portrays the Arabists in an unfavorable light. While the article appears to be objective on the surface, a subliminal anti-Arabist tone pervades it. For example, the author quotes a number of snide remarks



about us Arabists. Never once does he quote an official in the department referring to us favorably.

In my case, a former member of the Policy Planning Council is quoted as accusing me of acting like the Syrian ambassador to the United States rather than as the American ambassador to Syria when I was serving in Damascus. Yet he doesn't put this remark in context, namely the existence of an acute lack of understanding in the State Department in those days concerning Syria and President Assad—though elsewhere in the article Kaplan acknowledges this lack of understanding when he quotes two persons who make this point.

In one of these instances he quotes the head of the Middle East area studies program of the Foreign Service Institute as saying that "people on the National Security Council" (and presumably also those on the Policy Planning Council) do not have an adequate "frame of reference" to comprehend the nuances of the Middle East. Even the author admits that his own visit to Syria cleared up some preconceptions.

The author's allegation that I am one of the "breed" that opposed the creation of Israel, that I am among those "tortured" by this, and that as a result I am one of the "aggrieved," is ridiculous. In the first place, when I entered the Foreign Service, Israel already existed. I never challenged its existence during my career, I always supported the U.S. policy of assuring Israel's independence and territorial integrity, and, indeed, as Kaplan acknowledges elsewhere in the article, I have recognized Israel as one of our important interests in the Middle East. When I have criticized Israel, it has been solely because of certain egregious policies pursued during the Likud era.

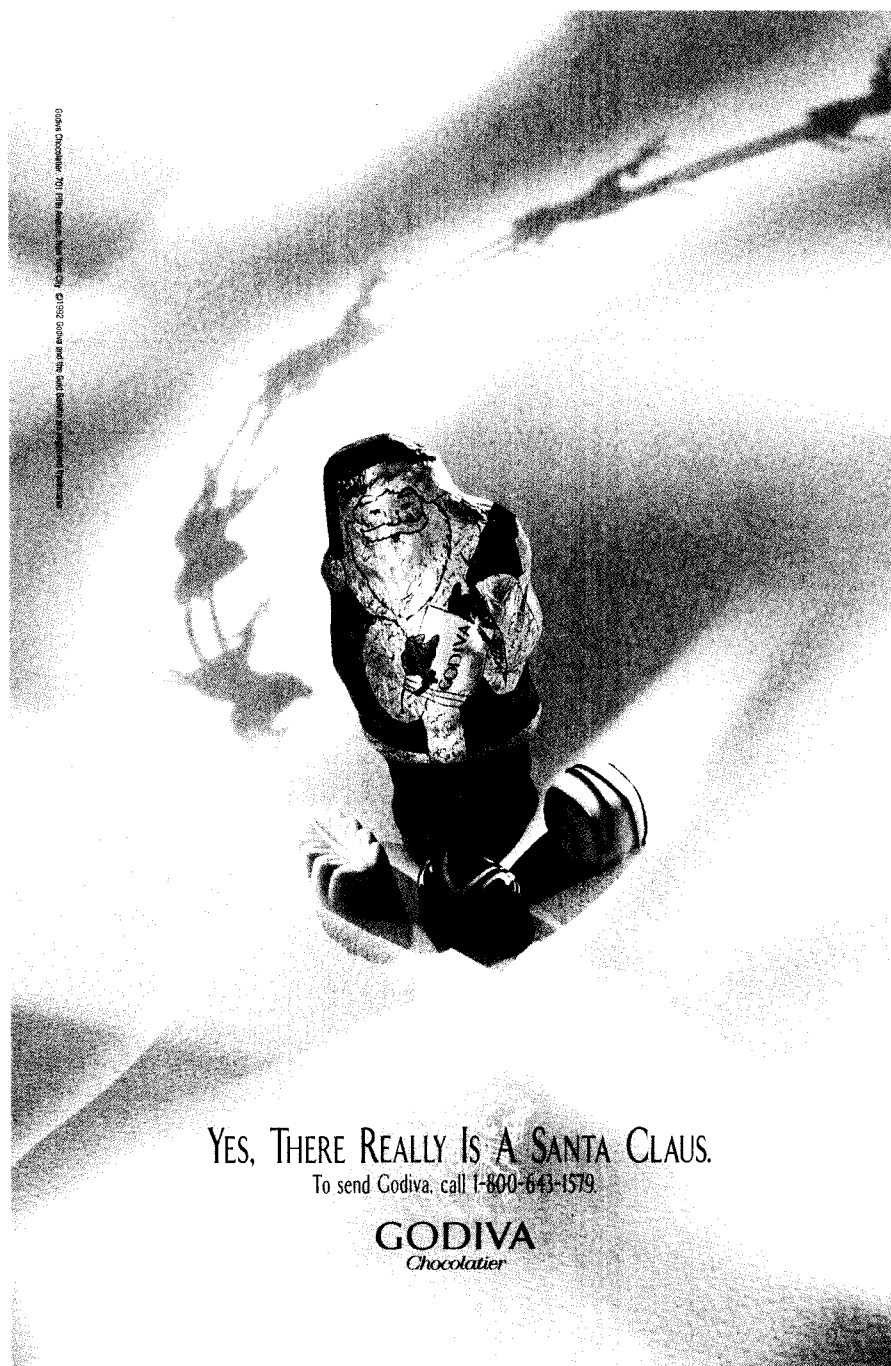
Kaplan writes, "Despite the tenor of some of the high points in Seelye's career, he would probably describe himself as holding a perfectly balanced view of the Arab-Israeli conflict." In this latter judgment he is correct, but the first clause of his statement suggests that the "high points" of my career involved being anti-Israel. I don't know what high points he is referring to in this regard, nor how they were anti-Israel. Does he consider me anti-Israel because of my conviction that a solution to the Palestinian problem is indispensable to an Arab-Israeli peace?

This view happens to be a pro-Israel one, because such a settlement serves Israel's long-term interests.

There is a similar implication in Kaplan's contention that I had a "stormy career" that brought me "into head-on clashes with supporters of Israel." In the first place, if my career had been stormy, I would not likely have been made a senior deputy assistant secretary of state (in the Bureau of African Affairs), ambassador to two countries (Tunisia and Syria), and a special emissary (to Lebanon).

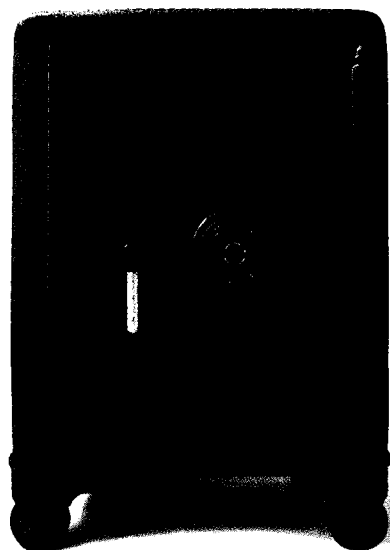
Furthermore, during my career I don't recall clashing with Israel supporters, except one time while I was in Damascus when Congressman Solarz took umbrage at something I said. Kaplan must be thinking of my post-Foreign Service period, when I was on the speakers' circuit and criticized certain deleterious Begin-Sharon policies.

For this reason AIPAC, the spearhead of the Jewish lobby, put me on its enemies list—which is an outrage in itself. Imagine one group of Americans calling another American—whose American



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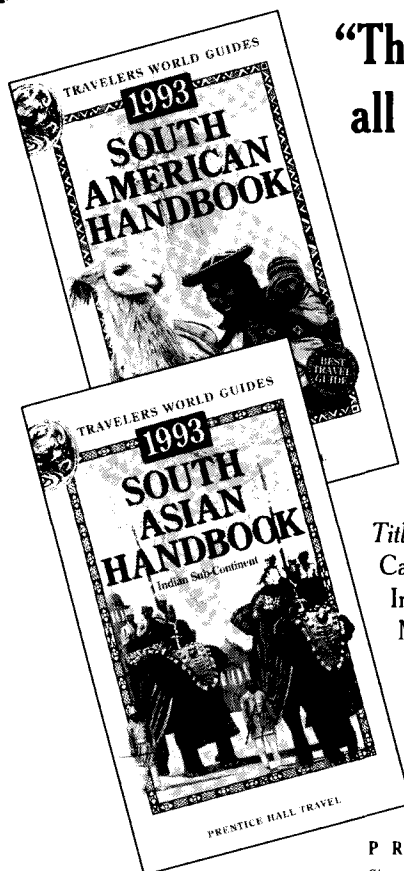
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ancestors, incidentally, go back to 1630—an enemy! In fact, until Rabin replaced Shamir as Prime Minister, AIPAC was supporting Likud policies that were antithetical to Israel’s long-term interest. I, on the other hand, have been advocating a dialogue with the Palestinians, including the PLO, which is clearly Israel’s best chance for peace.

Kaplan says I “disparage[d] the Camp David accords.” This is an oversimplification and therefore a misrepresentation of what I said when I left Damascus for retirement from the Foreign Service. What I said was that the Camp David accords were a “red flag” to the Arabs (true) and that therefore further peace efforts—that is, those addressing the Palestinian issue—should not be undertaken in the context of the Camp David agreement but rather should be treated separately in order to avoid the stigma attached to the Camp David accords in the Arab world.

Kaplan states that I was criticized for using the PLO security forces during my stint in Beirut in 1976. The fact is that there was no alternative course available, since the PLO ran West Beirut (the part in which the American embassy and the Lebanese ministries were located). After my arrival at the airport no other security element could have transported me safely to the embassy through artillery and tank fire. The same applied to my subsequent risky rounds. After all, the civil war was still on!

Furthermore, I was authorized to use PLO security for my protection by none other than Henry Kissinger. Kaplan never bothered to ask me about this whole episode—which is understandable, because he had told me that the article would not be political and therefore doing so would have betrayed his true intentions.

TALCOTT W. SEELYE
Plainfield, Mass.

Robert Kaplan leaves the reader, unintentionally, with the impression of a U.S. diplomatic corps peopled by experts steeped in the language and culture of a particular geographic area. Anyone who has had the misfortune of meeting our representatives abroad, and hearing the State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler at home, knows that this is very far from the truth. In fact, it is well known in foreign diplomatic circles that most



U.S. Foreign Service personnel are singularly ordinary and culturally awkward, and have nothing to recommend them except that they all seem to have been cut from the same bland "Made in the USA" cloth.

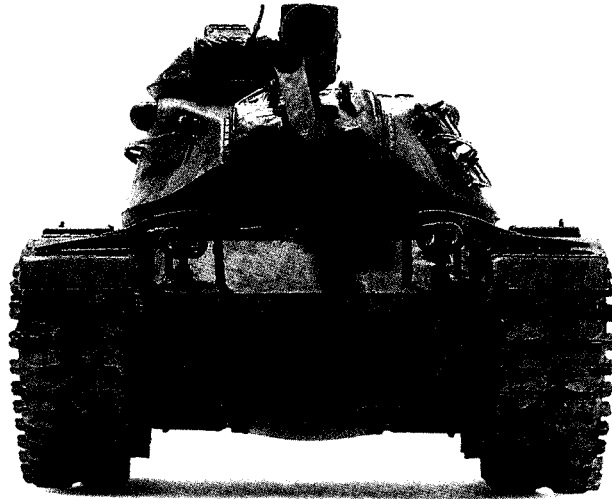
The experience of several of my acquaintances (some exceptional multilingualists among them), who passed the Foreign Service exam with flying colors and subsequently went on to a second round of tests and an oral interview, is instructive. Although all of them were rejected after presumably failing an ideological litmus test put to them by a panel of examiners, they report that the persons invariably selected were the most inappropriate International School types with little foreign experience and marginal language skills. Terence Todman, a career diplomat and a former ambassador to Spain and Denmark, recalled in an interview in *Ebony* magazine that at the conclusion of his oral interview his examiners indicated that they would like to hire him, but since he did not sound like an American (Todman was born in the Virgin Islands), he could not possibly represent the United States abroad. Fortunately Todman managed to prevail over his examiners.

I suspect that Arabists like Hume Horan and Talcott Seelye, if they had to go through the current process for selecting career diplomats, would probably also fail for not sounding or looking the part. Horan and Seelye remain very isolated examples of professionalism in the U.S. Foreign Service, and at the end of Kaplan's article we learn that there was only one Arabic-speaking diplomat in Sudan before a coup occurred, and similarly in Iraq on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait. I seriously doubt that there are any foreign diplomats in the United States who do not speak English.

KLAUS DE ALBUQUERQUE
College of Charleston
Charleston, S.C.

Robert Kaplan replies:

Ambassador Seelye's anger perplexes me. As the letter from Klaus de Albuquerque attests, other readers saw my description of him as complimentary, and indicative of his professionalism. My article leaves no doubt that Seelye's family played an inspiring role in bringing Western values and education to the Middle East. Furthermore,



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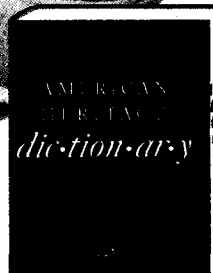
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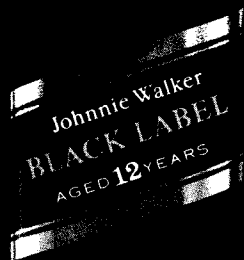
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"the backgrounds of Foreign Service Arabists" is precisely what my article is about. Inasmuch as the Foreign Service is the instrument of our foreign policy, how could such an article not be political? There are indeed favorable comments from State Department officials in the article: for example, the remark that Arabists don't have "the luxury to theorize from the sidelines." The ambassador misinterprets negative comments about Arabists at the beginning of the piece, which are there to demonstrate how the issue has been drowned in polemics.

Francis Fukuyama's remark about Seelye's being the "Syrian Ambassador to Washington" demonstrates the almost cultural clash between Washington types and overseas types in the State Department. Later, as Seelye himself admits, I provide evidence from my own experience which is favorable to the overseas types. But Seelye is correct that since I defend Ambassador David Newton on this score, I might also have defended him.

I describe Seelye's career, both in and out of the Foreign Service, as "sometimes stormy," which is exactly the way it was. Seelye's speeches about Israel, given as a private citizen, elicited controversy. Although he sees nothing wrong about his statements concerning the Camp David accords, delivered from the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, his performance is to this day a matter of controversy among his colleagues. Seelye resigned from the Foreign Service prior to making those comments, yet in all but a technical sense he was still a U.S. ambassador enjoined to represent U.S. policy exactly.

I see no contradiction between his account of using the PLO in Beirut in 1976 and mine. I wrote that "he did manage to effect a low-key evacuation of U.S. diplomats . . . from war-torn Beirut." I did indeed discuss it with him, and my notes indicate as much.

WAS AMERICA A MISTAKE?

"**W**as America a Mistake?" (by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., September *Atlantic*) is indeed both interesting and informative. However, the "politically correct" fad is annoying. Columbus cannot be blamed for extended deleterious results over which he had no control.

The arrival of Europeans certainly was hard on those tribes who constantly fought each other, those who celebrated human sacrifice, and so forth. The vision of all Indians as Rousseau-esque "noble savages" is as unrealistic as the arrogance of the invaders is deplorable.

MARY WAGNER
New Orleans, La.

The practice of historians and other pundits of cataloguing great movements and events with, usually, someone's name and a date gives rise to extraordinary misconceptions. It tends to give the curious impression that the epoch or event sprang forth abruptly, like some sort of spontaneous combustion that nobody expected or could account for. For example, Christopher Columbus and his encounter with one or another Caribbean island, otherwise known as the discovery of America, 1492, which Arthur Schlesinger Jr., dragging Walt Whitman unawares along with him, and an unseemly part of the Western world now sourly regret.

If Columbus made any mistake regarding America, it was navigational. He should not be ridiculed for others who sought profit from it. So get off Chris's back. Names and dates cannot account for epochs, nor do dates fix their origins, and neither is in the least responsible for what happened thereafter.

Columbus, lest we forget, lived at a time when drawing and quartering the criminally convicted, believing in divine right and intervention, and bleeding as a cure for the gout were respected institutions. So was taking domination without regard for the consequences, which was Columbus's simple goal. Perhaps, if that sensible though passionate man had been aware of all that some would now condemn his memory for, he might have called it quits in the Canary Islands, which had already been discovered and ruined by somebody else.

LAWRENCE D. ROSE
Mercer Island, Wash.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in his otherwise perceptive article assessing the impact of Euro-imperialism on the Western Hemisphere, fails to consider the complementary importance of American involvement in European affairs. If pre-Columbian America had

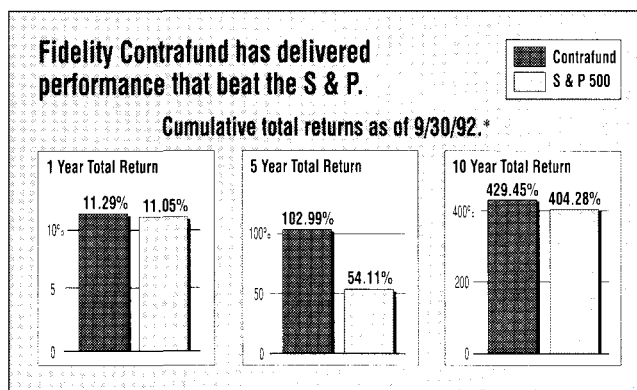
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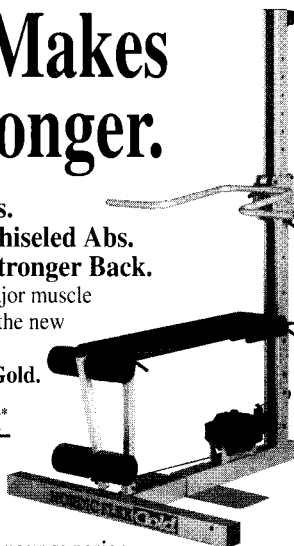
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somehow been indefinitely sealed off from European encroachment to remain the preserve of the Aztecs, Incas, and Iroquois, the Old World must eventually have fallen prey to either German or Russian militarism (whether totalitarian or merely autocratic in nature). Instead, the New World has come to the salvation of the Old three times in this century.

That geopolitical fact, as well as America's great scientific achievements (including a record number of Nobel prizewinners, amounting to 206 by 1992), makes the original question a foolish one for the revisionist "politically correct" lobby to ask.

TONY MARTIN
London, England

One hesitates to question the accuracy of so eminent and highly esteemed an author as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. However, I am curious about a quotation in his article: "As William James reminds us, 'The trail of the human serpent is thus over everything.'"

It is a marvelous image, and I immediately turned to my copy of Bartlett's Familiar Quotations to locate it in James. I did not find it, but I did find a quotation from Thomas Moore from his *Lalla Rookh*, Part II: "Some flow'rets of Eden ye still inherit, / But the trail of the serpent is over them all."

The similarities to and differences from Schlesinger's quotation are striking enough to make me wonder if he attempted to quote from memory.

ROBERT S. ECCLES
Greencastle, Ind.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. lists American places and "North American institutions" named after Columbus, but omits the largest place of all—the 948,000 square km. British Columbia, which is more than 5,300 times as large as the District of Columbia. He states that Canada is not putting nearly the same emphasis on the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's landing as the United States is, because of concern over natives' feelings.

While this may be so, it is nothing new; the second Monday in October is Thanksgiving Day here, not Columbus Day. Our corner of America was "discovered" by Europeans much earlier—Vikings landed at l'Anse aux Meadows almost 500 years before Columbus landed in the Bahamas. Perhaps this



hemispherical confusion and nomenclatural sloppiness arose because residents of the United States have, at least in English, more or less hogged the term "American" when it belongs by rights to the whole hemisphere.

MARC A. SCHINDLER
Gloucester, Ontario

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. replies:

I appreciate Tony Martin's point. Canning was right when he said in 1826, "I call the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old." Robert Eccles will find William James's sentence in Lecture Two, "What Pragmatism Means," in *Pragmatism*, and I thank him for tracking down what must have been James's allusion to Moore. And I applaud Marc Schindler's reminder about British Columbia and also the rest of his letter, including his comment on the appropriation by U.S. citizens of "American," as if other inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, from Cape Horn to Hudson's Bay, did not have equal claim on the word.

ADVICE & CONSENT

In a recent Word Watch entry for "full Cleveland" (August *Atlantic*), Anne H. Soukhanov has committed an error in description. Any serious practitioner of the style would eschew such a gauche oversimplification as white pants—it would detract from the accent value of the belt-and-shoe combination. Most would find a light-ocher faux-herringbone tweed, or perhaps a subtle check in green, orange, and brown (naturally, in polyester) to be more appropriate.

Please note that the white belt serves as a delineating feature, a crisp break that absolves the wearer of responsibility when sporting disparate florals, stripes, patterns, and checks. The matching shoes add punctuation to the overall effect, and also validate an image of leisurely living—no scuffs on these easygoing feet.

On a further and, in the scheme of things, completely unrelated note: I call your attention to the geographic eponym a "New York minute." Perhaps in this era of sound bites, faxes, shot clocks, program trades, and final countdowns, a "New York second" would be more appropriate.

MARK EUSTIS
Annapolis, Md.

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THE DECEMBER ALMANAC



DEMOGRAPHICS

Although summer has the highest overall crime rates and winter the lowest, the incidence of certain crimes will reach an annual peak this month. Among them are robberies and muggings: last December the incidence of such crimes was 13 percent greater than the 1991 monthly average. Law-enforcement officials attribute this surge to the heavier volume of shopping during the holiday season, which creates more appealing targets: pedestrians with packages or full wallets, houses full of gifts. Domestic homicides are also at an annual high this month. "A lot of it has to do with climate," according to James Fox, the dean of the College of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University. "In colder months, when you are indoors with people with whom you are related or intimate, you have more potential for conflicts. Whereas in the summer, when you are out and about more, murders involving strangers and acquaintances are higher."

Q & A

Why has no one come up with a feasible alternative to tennis balls that quickly go dead?

Regulation tennis balls consist of pressurized air surrounded by a thin, felt-covered rubber shell. Once the balls are removed from pressurized cans, the air inevitably starts to seep through the shell. Longer-lived "pressureless" balls have in fact been devised from rubber that is rigid enough to

bounce well on its own. Although they meet the criteria for bounciness set by the United States Tennis Association—that is, they rebound 53 to 58 feet from a drop of 100 feet—they have somewhat different playing characteristics and are barred from regulation play except at high altitudes. Pressureless balls are sold chiefly in Europe, where regulation balls are several times as expensive as they are in the United States. Frustrated players have tried a variety of repressurizing devices—compressors, needles—and home remedies, such as zapping balls in the microwave, tumbling them in the drier, even chilling them in the refrigerator. These measures are of questionable efficacy and have not dented the U.S. market for new balls, over 100 million of which are sold each year.



GOVERNMENT

New members of the House of Representatives will be choosing their offices this month, and given this year's record number of vacancies, a lot of space is up for grabs. Returning members may elect to move into empty offices on the basis of seniority (members with equal seniority who want new offices participate in a drawing that assigns temporary rankings within their cohort). Freshman congressmen choose from the leftovers in an order that is similarly determined by lottery. Among the usual criteria for choosing a particular office are its size, its view, and its proximity to the Capitol, to committee rooms, and to "Members only" elevators. Since it is rare that any one space will offer the optimum in all of these respects, a congressman's choice is often unpredictable.



FOOD

Holiday caviar buyers can count on another December price war. At this time last year New York retailers dropped the price of Caspian beluga caviar, which costs up to \$60 an ounce, by about 20 percent. The sturgeon fishery around the Caspian Sea, the source of much of the world's high-quality caviar, was closely regulated until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Now four countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan) and two autonomous Russian regions (Kalmyk and Dagestan) claim jurisdiction and cannot agree on catch limits. The resulting confusion has emboldened fishermen, underworld bosses, and corrupt bureaucrats to harvest and market caviar illegally for quick profit, despite predictions that the current rate of overfishing will deplete the resource in three to five years. Caspian sturgeon are also imperiled by decades of ecological abuse of their spawning grounds, in the region's rivers. One beneficiary of the imminent decline of Caspian caviar may be the fledgling U.S. domestic industry, supplied by sturgeon from rivers in the South and from the revitalized Great Lakes.

THE SKIES

December 9, total eclipse of the (full) Moon. In the eastern two thirds of North America, when the Moon rises tonight, shortly before sunset, it will already be wholly within Earth's shadow. This is the first total lunar eclipse since the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in



June of 1991, and astronomers anticipate that the huge amount of volcanic ash still in our atmosphere will create an unusually colorful shadow on the Moon. The full Moon is also known this month as the Popping Trees or the Long Nights Moon. 21, Winter Solstice; winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere. Daylight hours begin to increase. 24, partial eclipse of the Sun, visible in southwestern Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Also today, New Moon.



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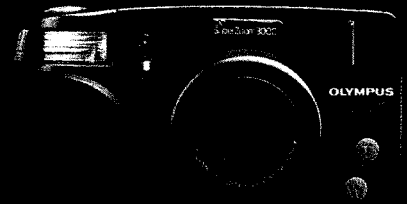
100 YEARS AGO

Agnes Repplier, writing in the December, 1892, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "A keen sense of the absurd is so little relished by those who have it not that it is too often considered solely as a weapon of offense, and not as a shield against the countless ills that come to man through lack of sanity and judgment. There is a well-defined impression in the world that the satirist, like the devil, roams abroad, seeking whom he may devour, and generally devouring the best; whereas his position is often that of the besieged, who defends himself with the sharpest weapons at his command against a host of invading evils. There are many things in life so radically unwholesome that it is not safe to approach them save with laughter as a disinfectant."



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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

Let Them Call Room Service

Putting the cost of tuition in perspective

THE YEARS have been kind to me, but lately age has begun to ravage my children, and now another one, little Nell, has surprised me with the news that she is ready for college. This is unsettling for all sorts of reasons. I suppose it would be vain to deny that money is among them, but on that score anyway I've been reassured by some of the country's educational leaders.

College presidents in recent years have understandably wearied of hearing complaints about the ever-rising fees they charge, and are assuming a more assertive attitude toward the consumer. Elizabeth Coleman, of Bennington, wrote to parents this year with a note of triumph that the tuition increase of 2.9 percent was, proportionally, "the lowest in the school's history." The new figure is \$23,880 for the year, or roughly the median after-tax income of an American family. Before his recent retirement Derek Bok, of Harvard, remarked that Harvard was, after all, a lot cheaper than the Ritz, across the river in Boston. Tuition at Harvard this year is \$23,514.

My favorite college president, the estimable Peter Pouncey, of Amherst, elaborated on this in-

sight in a letter announcing Amherst's new tuition, a relative bargain at \$22,700. President Pouncey pointed out that prorated, the cost of attending the school amounted to just \$106 a day for meals, lodging, and all sorts of diversions, from tennis courts to spectrometers. He asked, "What other human institution in America—hotel, conference center, think-tank, hospital, prison—could come close to offering this array of goods and services at so low a cost?"

He has a point. Certainly I've stayed at hotels that cost more than \$106 where you couldn't even find a microscope. In fact, I was so taken by President Pouncey's reasoning that I called up Amherst at once to book Nell a room. We had in mind a couple of weeks in fall, peak of foliage, football season. It would be the kind of experience that produces a life-

time of memories. I figured fourteen days for \$1,484—expensive, but something I just wanted to do for the girl. I'm afraid we got a rather chilly response.

ALL THIS has set me thinking about questions of comparative value. As always, historical perspective is our friend. In 1958 the tuition at Harvard College was \$1,250. I have this from a useful little book called *American Chronicle*, which provides another bit of supposed trivia, though it seems of vital import to me: in the same year, the cost of an economy-class ticket, round trip, from New York to Paris was \$489. These figures evoke for me a lost world of tranquillity and good sense.

There is, I think, a rightness beyond nostalgia to those sweet numbers, and I find the airfare—wildly, romantically expensive—nearly as beguiling as the tuition. Surely it is a self-evident truth of modern life that too many people travel and too few get educated. Forget absolute numbers for a moment. Would the world not be a better place if it cost nearly half as much to fly to Paris as to attend Harvard? More exactly, would not both Harvard and Paris be better off if it were easier to get to the one and harder to get to the other?

The \$1,250 figure cited above must refer solely to tuition, and one no doubt needs to add in a few hundred dollars for room and board. So while at first glance it might seem that college costs have increased by a factor of, say, twenty, in truth it's only about fourteen times as expensive to get an education as it used to be. If international airfares had increased similarly, the round-trip ticket to Paris would cost \$6,846—un-



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AT THE HELM



Among the world's top match-racing sailors is Eddie Warden Owen, age 43. His many achievements include winning the Congressional Cup in 1987 and the Omega Gold Cup in 1991, and coaching the New Zealand America's Cup team.

"I grew up in Holyhead, Wales. My father was a keen sailor and a founding member of the yacht club. I followed in his footsteps—it was something I enjoyed doing. Most of my sailing experience was gained at my local sailing club.

"I got involved in match racing after the America's Cup in Fremantle, Australia. Harold Cudmore, the skipper of *White Crusader*, didn't want to go to the Congressional Cup, in Long Beach, California. He asked if I would like to go. I said yes—it's a big deal to get an invitation to one of these events. I wasn't known on the circuit, and Harold was the first non-American to win the Congressional Cup. Lo and behold, we went out and showed them what we could do—and won it. The Congressional Cup is regarded as the Wimbledon, the event to win. We proved that all you need is the opportunity to go out there and try it.

"The reason I entered and have worked hard at this game of match racing is that I want to skipper an America's Cup yacht for Britain. The only way you can skipper one successfully is to be able to rub shoulders with your peers: the top match-racing sailors in the world."

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appealing compared with today's \$750.

But suppose both prices had risen in lockstep with the overall inflation rate of about 400 percent. Then Harvard, tuition alone, would cost \$5,000, and Paris, economy class, \$1,956. Now we're talking: you could go to Harvard and Paris for \$16,558 less than the current cost of Harvard alone, a saving sufficient to provide adequate room and board in both places. More to the point, you could send a child to Harvard, house him or her comfortably, buy two tickets to Paris, and have about \$10,000 left over for lunch. Suppose prices had risen at *double* the inflation rate: Harvard, with room and board included, would come to about \$16,000. You could still pay that bill and buy two (well-deserved) tickets, at \$3,912 each, for the amount of the current fee.

I suppose this would not seem a bargain to the childless, but in point of fact higher airfares might be a boon to all. I think that at about the \$4,000-per-ticket level, economy class, the airlines would actually want to give you something nice, like legroom. And mightn't this price, by separating the serious traveler from the impulse buyer, improve in-flight tone? So that next time the entire Massapequa High School Marching Band might not be sitting behind you making music with its armpits?

BY AVOIDING unseemly fare wars, colleges have managed since the magic year of 1958 to lap and lap again inflation's own brisk pace. But as a consumer you can cling to a couple of reassuring facts. First, now is an excellent time to buy compared with later, because at the accustomed rate of increase, in one more generation freshman year will cost perhaps \$330,000. Second, you're getting true value. This was borne out on a recent tour of several of New England's leading colleges undertaken by Nell and me.

Today's students have skills undreamed of even fifteen years ago. To take a small but significant example, they all know how to walk backward. Without fail our tour guides conducted their entire presentation without losing eye contact and without regard for where they were going.

Our visit to the sought-after New Hampshire school Merrychase was typical. Our guide, with the engaging good manners of the young, began by asking us what her name was: "Hi. I'm Melis-

sa? I'm a junior from San Ysidro, California, majoring in Shortness Studies, and I'll be your guide today!"

Colleges seem eager to please these days. You can see it in the dining complexes with facilities for omnivores, vegetarians, vegans, and hunter-gatherers. ("Because a lot of guys here? They really have a problem eating things they haven't killed with their own hands.") Living conditions on campus are generally just as cozy as you might remember, and they seem even cozier, because the average American male is 8.4 inches taller than a generation ago and is powered by 1,100 pounds of electronic equipment. (He also has a live-in girlfriend, which you might think would free up rooms elsewhere but doesn't.) So the rooms have both sophistication and intimacy, rather like airplane cockpits in which for the past few days the crew has been drinking beer and sorting its laundry.

What Melissa said about Merrychase applies at all the finer schools. As I remember, it's need-blind and incredibly diverse. Classes are small except for the few that are large, but are really small anyway because they meet in sections, which are mostly taught by real professors who are accessible. Professors invite you to dinner. There are no requirements. It's a great place to be but you only have to be here for the last semester of senior year if you decide to do field study. The work load is intense, and the atmosphere is really supportive.

Melissa tripped only once, and that was over a tiny, well-dressed man who was picking grass from the cracks in the sidewalk. "Oops! Hi, Mr. Neville! That was Mr. Neville. He's on PWP." She explained that PWP was the parents' work program, available for parents who want to work their children's way through college. "My roommate's mom is like a room-cleaner-person."

This was of course inspiring. And the leaves were acrunch underfoot, and the imposing white bell tower sent chimes pealing, and the notes seemed to bounce off the blue dome of the sky above. These are wonderful places, and surely worth a bit of sacrifice, I thought. Nell seemed to agree. She is applying to Merrychase, as it turns out, and now we just have to wait to see if she's admitted. If not, I guess it's 133 round trips to Paris for her mother and 133 companion fares for me.

—Richard Todd

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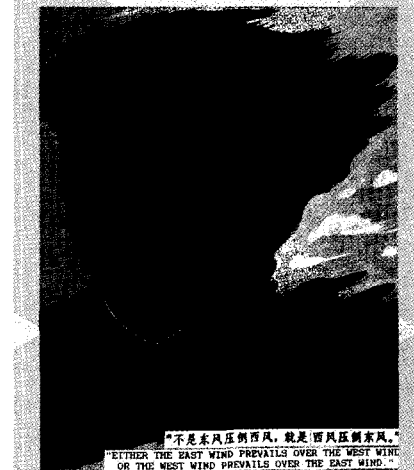
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CHINA

Once Again, Long Live Chairman Mao

*A recent return to deifying Mao
is less straightforward
than it seems*

WHEN MAO ZEDONG died, in 1976, and his wife, Jiang Qing, was arrested as the leading spirit in the Gang of Four, the Great Helmsman's legacy presented Deng Xiaoping, his reform-minded successor, with a dilemma. To de-emphasize Mao's legacy in China, as Khrushchev had tried to "de-Stalinize" the Soviet Union, would have shaken loose the keystone of the ideological arch that still held up the Chinese Communist Party's right to rule unilaterally in the name of the people. However, to continue emphasizing Mao's militant class-based ideology would have collided with the kinds of economic reforms that Deng, who had himself been accused of being a "capitalist roader," and had suffered grievously as a result of Mao's whimsical dictates during the Cultural Revolution, viewed as essential for the transformation of China into a modern country.

Deng adopted a strategy of distancing himself from Mao's legacy without

entirely repudiating it. As Confucius said of the spirits, "They must be respected but kept at a distance." Mao was mothballed: his mummified corpse remained on periodic display in a crystal sarcophagus in his mausoleum in Tiananmen Square, while his political legacy drifted into a decade-long state of suspended animation. But Mao remained a totem even while Deng's momentous reformation of the Chinese economy and his opening China to the outside began to assault ideologically all that Mao stood for.

By the end of the decade, however, the once ubiquitous images of Mao in China had all but disappeared. Most ordinary Chinese were glad to unburden themselves of the remaining effluvia of the Cultural Revolution—Red Books of Mao quotations, Red Guard armbands, posters of Party leaders, Mao buttons, and obligatory ceramic Mao busts—without fear of being labeled apostates. Most institutions were only too pleased to remove the portraits of Mao that had hung in every public room, and even to dynamite most of the mammoth statues of Mao that had dotted China's urban landscape. By the mid-1980s Mao memorabilia were in evidence only in curio shops, where vexed clerks watched as Westerners sought them as eagerly as if they were Ming Dynasty antiques.

Mao's influence remained latent nonetheless. The wave of student protests at the end of 1986 led to a power

struggle within the Party which culminated in a resurgence of Maoist ideals during the winter of 1987. So, too, the dark and repressive period that followed the 1989 Beijing Massacre presaged a Party-sponsored attempt to revive Maoism. What was curious was that although the resurgence was initiated by diehard Maoist leaders who had generally lost favor but had gained new political leverage during the crack-down, certain other aspects of old Mao kultur began to find an unexpected resonance among ordinary Chinese.

In fact, by the end of last year a surprising new craze for Mao trivia had spread throughout China. Although it lacked the political frenzy of the Cultural Revolution, during which weeping devotees of Mao marched across China in his name, beat to death supposed enemies of his revolution, and even pinned Mao buttons to their naked flesh, this latter-day infatuation was remarkably widespread. Beginning in 1990 travelers in southern China began to notice what at first seemed like no more than occasional spectral images of Mao reappearing in unforeseen places. By last year many street markets throughout China were stocked with tubs full of badges, tattered posters, plates emblazoned with Mao's figure, embroideries of his visage, busts in varying sizes (even some that glowed in the dark), and alarm clocks adorned with Red Guards holding Red Bibles they waved with each tick. One afi-

New kinds of Mao images, the recent work of Zhang Hongtu, a Chinese artist exiled in the United States. Artists in China are beginning to produce similar images

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cionado in Sichuan Province was reported to have gathered some 18,000 of these collectibles—a veritable museum of Mao memorabilia. With the hundredth anniversary of Mao's birth on December twenty-sixth of next year, it will not be surprising if yet another wave of Mao trinkets appears.

WHEREVER I've gone in China during the past few years, I've heard tales of people who have allegedly been saved by Mao. "People say because Mao has become divine like a god, he can bring good luck," a shopkeeper in Wushi explained as she wrapped up some Mao pendants I had just bought. "Some people say the old guy can even protect you from bad fortune!" She shrugged and gave an embarrassed laugh. I've heard stories about drivers who claim that the protection afforded by a Mao amulet allowed them to walk away uninjured from the scene of a hideous crash while those without one were maimed for life, and tales of street vendors who escaped robbery and even murder because they had fortified themselves with a photo of Mao. I was hardly surprised to hear that huge numbers of destitute peasants in southeast China bought Mao talismans after the catastrophic floods of the summer of last year.

Capitalizing on this new infatuation with Mao, the state-owned Xinhua bookstore sold more than 10 million copies of a new four-volume edition of Mao's collected works last year, and state-owned film studios have been cranking out docudramas. The 1991 film *Mao Zedong and His Son* was calculated to make Mao appear more human by highlighting an emotional scene in which he was told that his son Mao Anying had just been killed in the Korean War by the Americans. Such efforts to humanize Mao continued this year with the release of the propagandist *Story of Mao Zedong*.

Almost everywhere one turned in China last year, Mao kitsch popped up. Beijing Television even began airing an American-style quiz show called *Sun and Truth*. Taped before a live audience and presided over by a TV personality named Chao Shan (attired not in a Mao jacket and pug-nosed cap but in a Western-style suit, tie, and trendy dark glasses), the program pitted three-member teams from different state en-

terprises against each other in a competition to recite well-known Mao quotations on command and to identify the dates, places, and contexts of other Mao quotations.

NOSTALGIC Maoists fancy that they understand the phenomenon. To them it represents a second coming of their political patron saint. Hard-liners have actually tried to exploit, even to further, the Mao craze as part of their ongoing struggle against the emphatically anti-Maoist economic reforms once again being promoted by Deng Xiaoping and his allies.

At the very least the Mao revival was linked to the post-Tiananmen Square propaganda of hard-line Marxists. But it has probably been commercialism more than anything else that has kept it alive. As capitalist-style market reforms have once again gained velocity, entrepreneurs have gladly taken up Mao because he sells.

Last year the investigative journalist Jia Lusheng published *The Sun That Never Sets*, a popular book in which he suggested that China's new fascination with Mao reflects a longing for those early years when the country seemed more stable and had a leader of mythic proportions to look up to. According to Jia, the symbols of the Chinese Communist Revolution—indeed, its whole legacy—can still evoke feelings of pride, respect, and awe which are almost primal for many Chinese. During times of cultural ambiguity and social chaos over the ages the Chinese have looked backward to China's pre-imperial past, to venerate the mythical Yellow Emperor and the model rulers Yao and Xun—sage kings who are believed to have lived in the utopian mists of prehistory. Now, amid bankrupt ideology, discredited leadership, rising crime rates, and troubling economic reconfiguration, they have turned toward a fantasy of another golden age: the early years of Maoist rule, before the political campaigns and purges reached their apogee, in the late 1950s and 1960s.

"There is definitely a lot more at work here than just nostalgia," a Chinese acquaintance cautioned when I showed her the host of photos, talismans, and baubles I had been collecting. "Our current leaders are just a bunch of generals chosen from an army of dwarfs," she scoffed, reciting an age-old Chinese expression. "It may be that

hard-liners in the Party supported this thing, but if they did, they have given their detractors a convenient way to thumb their noses at authority without risking reprisals. There's a good deal of the old tactic of 'waving the red flag to attack the red flag' going on here."

And how do all the people swept up in this fad manage to overlook Mao's destructive role in the Cultural Revolution? "I think the fact that so many people still look back so wistfully to Mao in spite of what they feel about the Cultural Revolution only highlights their ambivalence toward Deng, Li, and Yang," my friend replied, referring to China's ex-officio leader Deng Xiaoping, Premier Li Peng, and President Yang Shangkun, the architects of the Beijing Massacre. "Consciously or not, they're really saying that even with all his many flaws Mao was still more venerable than the current gang."

THE MORE I have seen of the recent Mao phenomenon, the harder it has been to tell whether Mao is being adored or defamed. In a way that many octogenarian Party elders seem unable to grasp, Mao and his revolution are taking quite a beating—to the point of seeming ludicrous—at the hands of this new popular-culture fad. With the exception of the 1989 protest movement, Chinese dissent has almost always had to find expression by means of Aesopian language, subtle satire, allegory, and other forms of indirection. Because Mao has been reduced to a bauble on a cheap key ring or a blurry plastic-encased photo dangling from the rearview mirror of a taxi, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that in certain respects the Mao revival is also a backhanded slap.

Nowhere is the ambiguity of the message more evident than in the revival of "revolutionary songs" from the 1950s and 1960s which swept China late last year. Whereas in the late 1980s disenchanted Chinese hardly dared to toy with the music, much less the words, of official slogans and old songs as outlets for their sarcasm, now state-owned recording companies openly soup up the revolutionary songs with disco, country-and-western, and rock-and-roll arrangements and then sell the recordings at great profit. Chinese pop music has in the past remained largely aloof from even faintly suggestive political material, favoring saccharine



love ballads instead. One of the most bizarre of the new hybrids is the disco version of "Washing Clothes for the People's Liberation Army," a song in which Tibetan maidens express their undying love for a group of People's Liberation Army soldiers—presumably part of the Chinese force occupying the Tibetan Autonomous Region—by helping them do their laundry. In this recording, crooned by a young woman with a syrupy voice, over a vibraphone and Mantovani-like cascades of strings, the only enduring martial quality is the relentless drum-machine track.

WHILE MANY hard-liners favor this fad for updated songs from the Revolution, reform-minded leaders are much less enthusiastic. What concerns them is not only the way in which the Mao craze plays on old superstitions by deifying the former Chairman but also the possibility that these dogmatic songs might encourage a resurgence of leftism despite their pop-music veneer. The one thing almost all Chinese—even most of the

leaders—agree on is that the Cultural Revolution was a catastrophe.

Deng Xiaoping, who spent several years under virtual arrest during the Cultural Revolution, and who has recently launched a campaign against Marxist "leftism," said last January, "Right now certain people are set on launching a campaign to glorify Mao. In my view it is abnormal, nothing more than a provocation that is contrary to our fundamental orientation." Why is Deng so wary of the Mao craze? Because, he said, "young people today who do not understand the last forty years of the history of our country may be given the wrong impression."

Whatever the intra-party politics behind the revival of these songs, it is not easy to keep a straight face while listening to a country-and-western rendition of "Mao and the People Together" with Hawaiian-guitar solos between verses, or "The Sun Is Most Red and Chairman Mao Is Our Most Beloved" embellished with electronic church bells and sung in close harmony. Although the new get-down version of

"Ah, Chairman Mao, How the People From the Grasslands Long to Behold You!" might suggest to some hard-liners a renewed love of Mao and an ardor for socialism, it is hard to imagine that true Maoists, who spent years guarding against what Mao called "sugar-coated bullets from the bourgeoisie," are not mortally offended by such vulgarizations of their revolution. The willingness of ordinary people to make Mao a part of their disco dreams represents a monumental change of attitude. If Mao is being reborn at all, it is not as the political messiah that hard-line Marxists hope for but as a pop-culture phenomenon that raises the notion of camp in China to a new high.

WITH THE growing disparity between official ideology and reality and between economic and political reform, the Chinese system has become every bit as bastardized and contradictory as these latter-day revolutionary songs. While the Party continues to pretend that socialism is still alive and well—albeit now

America

was in turmoil.

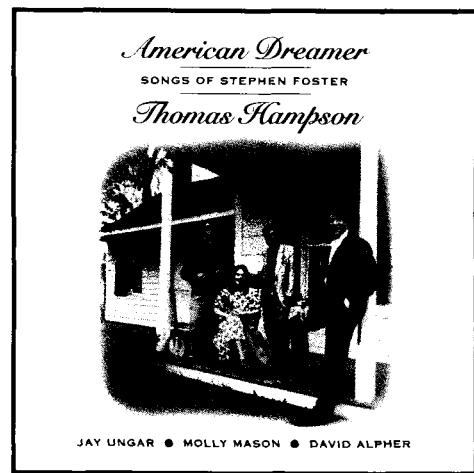
Romance was in the air.

Depression

was in the streets.

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Whether it's 1992 or 1864, nobody captures the spirit of the day like Stephen Foster. His insight and sensitivity didn't just influence the music of the 19th century, but all songwriting that came afterward. And now Thomas Hampson creates this feeling once again with *American Dreamer*, featuring the folk art sound of Jay Ungar on fiddle. A musical tribute of classic Stephen Foster songs performed with the passion only Thomas Hampson can deliver. His rich baritone glides effortlessly through classic Americana favorites like *Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair*, *Beautiful Dreamer*, and *Hard Times Come Again No More*. Not just recreating the folk song but redefining it as well.



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imbued with what it likes to refer to as “Chinese characteristics”—these songs underscore the extent to which socialist culture has been lost.

Avant-garde artists of all kinds have recently exploited revolutionary visual imagery for their own subversive purposes. For example, the painter Wang Guangyi, who won notoriety for superimposing grids of black lines over bold portraits of Mao to suggest that he was being held behind bars, has turned to creating still lifes in which images from Cultural Revolution propaganda posters are shown alongside advertisements for such bourgeois products as Nescafé and Coca-Cola. Huai Ren—a name meaning “Evil-doer,” adopted by a former railroad worker whose involvement in the 1989 protest movement prompted Beijing police to wreck his studio—has begun painting scenes of decapitations and a bizarre series of shoes, including one painting of People’s Liberation Army sneakers splattered with red paint.

Zhang Hongtu, an artist who studied at the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts before going into exile in the United States, has produced a replica of Da Vinci’s *Last Supper*, in which all the apostles not only wear Mao suits and caps but have Mao’s face, and a series of irreverent Mao panels, including an outline of Mao’s fleshy loin-clothed body done in the manner of a traditional acupuncture chart; a portrait of a randy Mao ogling the Goddess of Democracy with a speech bubble overhead exclaiming, “Women!”; and even a blank silhouette of Mao’s familiar portrait with a likeness of the democracy-movement leader Wuer Kaixi speaking through a megaphone superimposed over the Chairman’s face. Although these panels were made in the United States, artists in China are now beginning to use the same kind of forbidden images in their works. “The Mao image has a charisma of its own,” Zhang wrote to a friend about his tongue-in-cheek portraiture after the Beijing Massacre. “It’s still so powerful that the first time I cut up an official portrait of Mao for a collage, I felt a pang of guilt, something gnawing away inside me.”

Mao is slowly being stripped of his imperial quality, of his ability to evoke either awe or fear. Just before I left Beijing last June, one Chinese friend jokingly predicted that it wouldn’t be long before some clever advertising ac-

count executive—and there are more and more of them in China—tried to put Mao’s unsmiling visage on a brand of soft drink or detergent.

Just as Mao’s embalmed corpse still lies in repose in the middle of Tiananmen Square, so his thought still resides at the very core of the ideological canon on which Party leaders continue to rely (even as reformers appear again to be gaining ascendancy over hard-liners). The appropriation of this revolutionary culture for commercial, politi-

cal, or even artistic purposes, despite the government’s repressive policies toward overt dissent, is having a subtle but profound impact on the way the Chinese look back on Mao’s legacy of revolution. Despite its subtlety and indirection, the trend could well prove to be just as corrosive to official ideology and Communist Party rule as all the sloganeering, wall-poster writing, and banner-waving of the 1989 protest movement.

—Orville Schell

ED KASHI/IB PICTURES



Near the Turkish border poor Kurds scavenge wheat missed by a landowner’s harvester

KURDISTAN

After Saddam Hussein

The Kurds have set up a cohesive administration in northern Iraq, but the UN embargo is an unnecessary thorn in their daily life—and counterproductive to the aim of upsetting the Baghdad regime

AS I PREPARED to travel to Iraqi Kurdistan last June, Peter Galbraith, a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer and a longtime champion of the Kurds, sought to alleviate my apprehensions. I would be safer there, he said, than in Washington, D.C. Although he had visited northern Iraq several times since the

Gulf War, I was skeptical. Yet less than twelve hours after arriving in Iraq, I recognized that he was probably right.

Iraq’s Kurds are effectively running their own affairs, administering a population of 3.5 million in a territory almost twice the size of Israel. They are doing so with considerable success, having managed the transition from authoritarian rule better than many others, including Afghans, Somalis, and the various peoples of the former Soviet Union. In fact, with little outside assistance the Kurds have accomplished what George Bush has so far failed to achieve elsewhere in Iraq—the orderly overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

In Sulaimaniya, the largest and southernmost city under Kurdish control, I started to understand the remarkable social cohesion underlying the success of the Iraqi Kurds’ administration. Sulaimaniya’s police chief explained that there was, in fact, less crime now in northern Iraq than there had been un-



I CAN'T RECALL A WINTER'S DAY when my brother wasn't the FIRST to grace the ice in the morning, and the LAST to leave his mark on it in the evening. So I was pleasantly surprised when he accepted the invitation to spend *an entire Thanksgiving Day* at my home instead of on the lake. It was then I proudly introduced him to Glenfiddich single malt. Sipping it neat, he ventured, "The only thing that could possibly make this Scotch any smoother would be *to serve it over ice.*" I was puzzled. It wasn't until he entertained the family on Christmas Eve that I understood exactly what he meant.



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der the Ba'ath. Thus policemen's jobs had become easier. "Before, people didn't trust the police and avoided them. Now they cooperate with us."

Fouad Masoum, the head of the regional Kurdish government elected last May, made a similar observation. Cheating on the high school matriculation exams was down. "Before, cheating was a good thing to do because it was against the regime. Now the students feel responsible."

The Iraqi Kurds' strong feelings of communal solidarity are rare in the Middle East, where tribal, religious, and ethnic factionalism is often fatal to social order. The Kurds were once known for such divisions, and apprehension remains that these could re-emerge, particularly between the two main parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed by Jalal Talabani, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, headed by Massoud Barzani, the son of the legendary Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Yet nearly two decades of increasingly genocidal repression has forged a remarkable unity among the people, and today the leadership recognizes that any split could provide Saddam Hussein with a deadly opportunity to intervene. Relief is universal among the Kurds that the Iraqi dictator is gone from their area, and even the present hard times seem good compared with the hell of the recent past. Thus internal fighting is not a significant problem among Iraq's Kurds, although Baghdad tries to provoke conflict among them. The Palestinians, in contrast, suffer from such problems.

Moreover, the Iraqi population is relatively well educated by regional standards, and its bureaucracy is relatively disciplined and effective. Iraqi Kurds share in those qualities. They are proud of what they have accomplished, and they value dignity and honor to a degree rare in the West. Despite the economic problems, I did not see a single adult begging. Of what major American city can that be said? Driving through the countryside late one afternoon, I picked up a man sitting by the road with a huge sack. He had lost his identity papers and could not get rations. He had been gleaning the fields and had more children to feed than dinars in his pocket. As I took out some money, he went through the ritual of declining it, leaving me to insist that he accept it.

Despite the Kurds' relief that Saddam Hussein was gone, Iraqi Kurdistan

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Week-long lines for home-heating oil

was a very sad place. Evidence of atrocities was everywhere. To suppress the Kurdish rebellion during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein depopulated the countryside, destroying nearly 4,000 of the 5,000 Kurdish villages. Piles of rubble where villages once stood testify to Baghdad's barbarous campaign.

Qushtapa is today home to the Barzan widows. Eight thousand of Massoud Barzani's kinsmen—one in five of the men of the Barzani tribe—were killed. The widows and their children settled in this concrete-block village south of Irbil, the administrative capital in the center of Iraqi Kurdistan. Qushtapa has only dirt roads and no running water, owing to Saddam Hussein's vengefulness.

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A guerrilla fighter and orphaned relatives

The women tell of murderous persecution going back to 1975, when the Kurdish revolt, then led by Massoud Barzani's father and supported by Iran, the United States, and Israel, suddenly collapsed after the Shah of Iran reached a surprise agreement with the Iraqi leader, and the United States cut off aid to the Kurdish rebels. ("Our movement and people are being destroyed in an unbelievable way," Mustafa Barzani wrote to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, pleading for help. Kissinger did not deign to reply. Explaining in secret testimony why the United States abandoned the Kurds, Kissinger offered this pithy profile in cynicism: "Covert action should not be confused with missionary work.") In 1975 the Iraqi army came and rounded up everyone in the widows' village, taking them to a compound in the southern desert. On the walls of the huts, which were unfit for human habitation, was scrawled "Dar al-Fana"—"House of Annihilation." Many people died. Eventually the survivors were allowed to return to the north, and ended up in Qushtapa. But in 1983, after Iraq began to lose the war with revolutionary Iran, the army returned. One night soldiers surrounded the village, seizing every grown male, including the blind and the crippled. The women and children cried and tried to follow their husbands, sons, and fathers, but Iraqi forces fired on them, forcing them back.

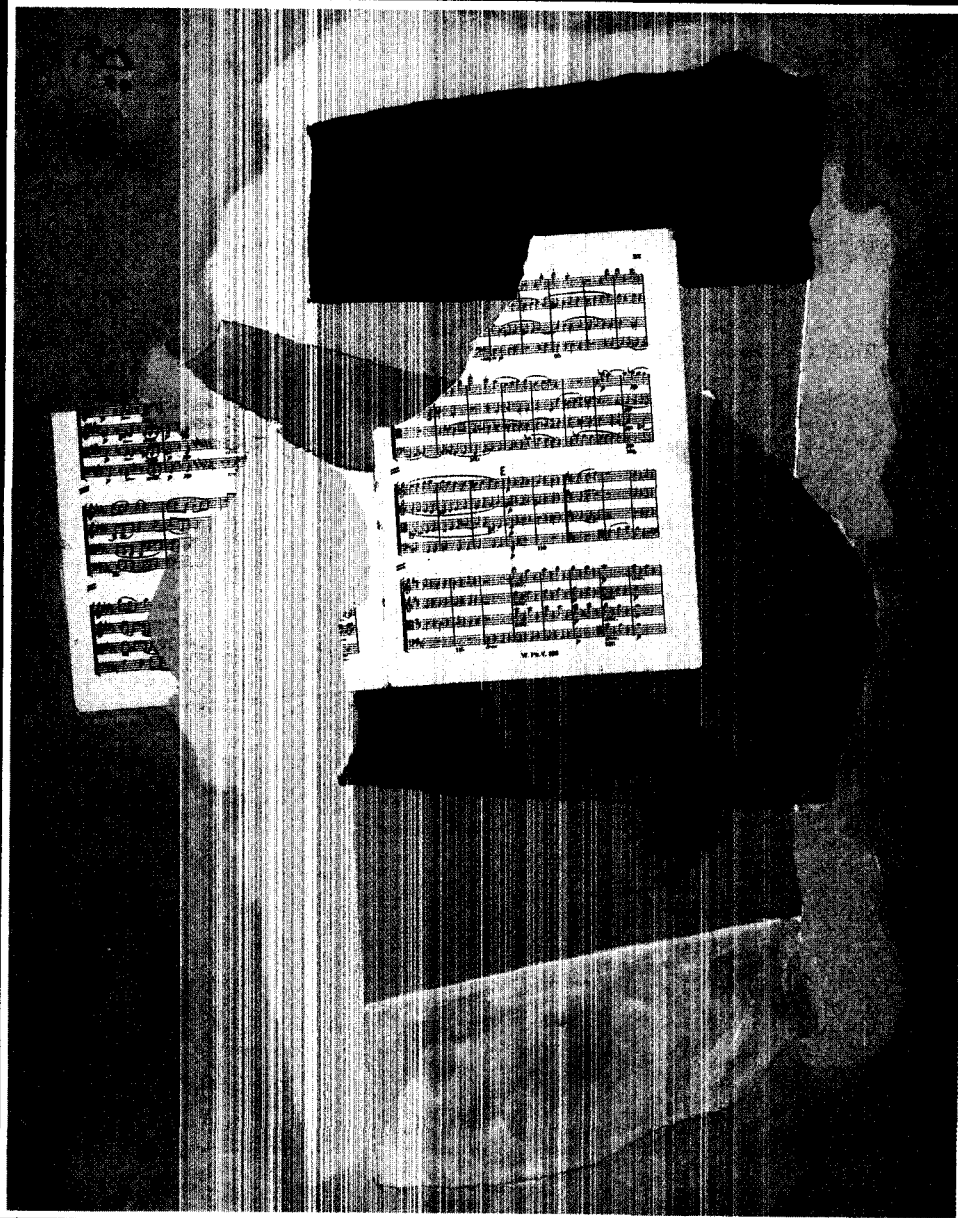
As this story came to an end, I asked my interlocutor, who seemed strangely emotionless, what she felt. "As long as we are all created by one God," she said, "it must be the end of days that such things happen, because all laws are reversed at the end of days." I heard many other stories of atrocities, told in the same flat voice, without anger, self-pity, or shyness. They want the world, particularly America, to know: Baghdad's use of chemical weapons was only one element of a genocidal campaign, the full dimensions of which are not yet recognized.

But while the memory of past horrors lingered, there was also a remarkable happiness, a tangible giddiness, in the clear summer air of Iraqi Kurdistan. Unlike most of the Middle East, the Kurdish countryside is well watered and green. Traveling south to Sulaimaniya we passed many families marking a Muslim holiday with picnics in shady

(Continued on page 49)

OVER EXPOSED

PREVIEW



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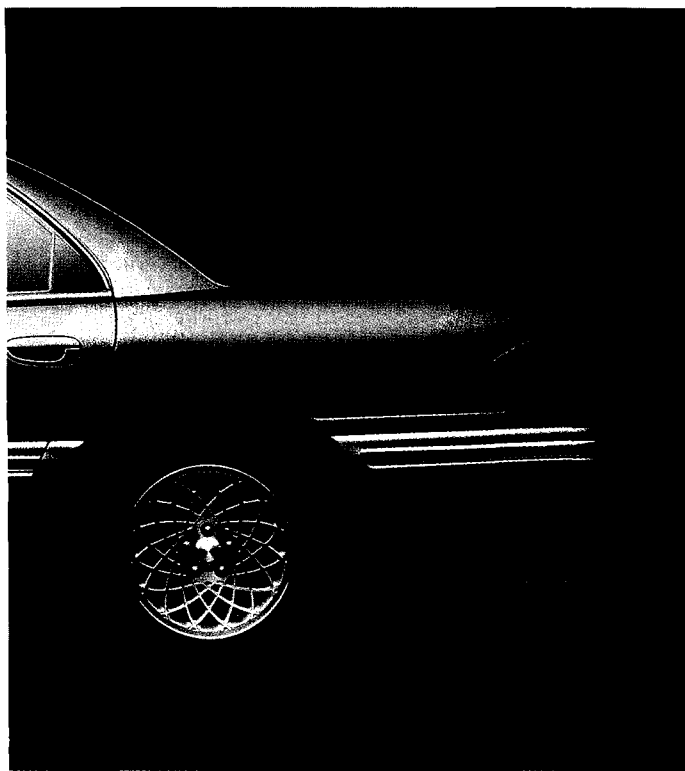
encourage this belief by raising those prices every year.) However, the time has officially come to take a long, hard look at the relationship between a car's price and its value. What's made that necessary is a startling development called the Chrysler Concorde. The Chrysler Concorde is a new luxury sedan



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FILM

by Ella Taylor

MUCH MUCH TOO MUCH!

ime was when Christmas brought movies only to warm the heart, or at least the Inner Child. In today's Hollywood, tis the season to be gory. Take, for example, Universal Pictures' yuletide movie *Trespass*, tactfully pushed back from its original release date, just after the Los Angeles riots, and renamed from the unfortunate *The Looters*. Directed by Walter Hill (*48 HRS*), *Trespass* stars rappers Ice-T and Ice Cube as inner-city crime lords who cross swords with two firemen searching for hidden treasure in a burned-out St. Louis factory. Doubtless they all end up unwrapping state-of-the-art firearms and hugging under



Damage

the holly. If you prefer your hyperbole in family values try Louis Malle's *Damage*. Based on a best-selling novel by Josephine Hart, it stars Jeremy Irons (with a lingering trace of his Boris Karloff routine from *Reversal of Fortune*) as a successful but uptight English politician who becomes sexually obsessed with his son's troubled girlfriend (Juliette Binoche). A lot of psychological heavy breathing and some unintentionally hilarious athletic maneuvers in the sack make this absurdly overwrought film all but unrecognizable as the work of the man who made the fabulous *Murmur of the Heart* and *Atlantic City*.

GET OUT YOUR HANDKERCHIEFS

ational angst aside, it's still a wonderful life in the Christmas weepie department. Martin Brest's distressingly titled *Scent of a Woman* features Al Pacino as a bitter blind man who hires a teenage preppie (Chris O'Donnell) to accompany him on a Thanksgiving-weekend spree in Manhattan. I would pay money to see Pacino even if he were starring in *Daffy Duck*, but I don't like the idea of him getting in touch with his better self. In *Used People*, directed by Beeban Kidron (*Antonia and Jane*), Marcello Mastroianni stars as an Italian patriarch who proposes to a nice Jewish granny (Shirley MacLaine) on the day of her husband's funeral. Will she blow it by inviting him to channel with her? Speaking of higher authorities, in Richard Pearce's film *Leap of Faith*,



Scent of a Woman

Steve Martin plays Reverend Jonas, a traveling evangelist who, with his sidekick (Debra Winger), fakes miracles for bucks until he runs into small-town sheriff Liam Neeson. If I tell you the movie ends with a real miracle, will you still respect me in the morning? For comedy with your uplift try *Peter's Friends*, an English *Big Chill* directed by no less than Kenneth Branagh (*Henry V*, *Dead Again*), in which a bunch

of upper-class twits congregate for New Year's Eve at the country seat of a friend and whine incessantly about their feelings in what seems like a very long sitcom with great production values. Designer gaglines are by standup comic Rita Rudner. Bogus emotions are by Branagh, culminating in a shameless ripoff of the AIDS crisis for purposes of a tear-jerking finale. You'd



Used People

be better off gathering up some kids for cover and heading for Disney's *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, in which Kermit and Miss Piggy are Scrooged by a deliciously sullen Michael Caine.

IN SMALL PACKAGES

few intrepid independent distributors are willing to risk getting trampled under the studios' Christmas stampede, especially if they're angling for Oscars too. In Regis Wargnier's *Indochine*, Southeast Asian history disappears into a heroic romance, not unlike *The Jewel in the Crown* in tone, starring Catherine Deneuve as a rubber-plantation owner whose adoptive daughter (Linh Dan Pham) takes up with a naval officer (Vincent Perez) and turns revolutionary just as French Indochina splits into Vietnam and

PORTRAIT OF AN OSCAR?

Even the season's big biopics lean toward excess. Spike Lee leads the way at Thanksgiving with his three-hour-plus *Malcolm X*, starring Denzel Washington in what may be an Oscar-winning performance as the black street hustler turned religious and political leader. Washington faces a serious challenge in the race for Best Actor from Jack Nicholson as the power-hungry Teamster boss in Danny DeVito's *Hoffa*. One wonders how Nicholson, prosthethized up to the eyeballs, will get his tongue around the scads of undeleted expletives that will surely pepper



Nicholson and DeVito in *Hoffa*

David Mamet's screenplay. On second thought—he'll manage. Robert Downey, Jr., makes his bid for greatness as the scandal-wracked Little Tramp in Richard Attenborough's \$40 million *Chaplin*, which also stars Dan Aykroyd as Mack Sennett, Kevin Kline as Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and the wonderful Marisa Tomei (*My Cousin Vinny*) as silent screen star Mabel Normand. In an oedipal twist that would blanch the cheeks of Freud, Chaplin's daughter Geraldine plays his mother, Hannah. On a quieter note, Michael Caton-Jones directs Robert De Niro, Ellen Barkin, and Leonardo DiCaprio in *This Boy's Life*, an adaptation of Tobias Wolff's autobiography.

Cambodia. But perhaps the quintessential Christmas movie comes from Abel Ferrara (*King of New York*). In *Bad Lieutenant* (rated the controversial NC-17), Harvey Keitel plays a New York City cop strung out on alcohol, cocaine, heroin, and gambling, who's assigned to investigate the altar rape of a beautiful nun (Frankie Thorn). "It's not about New York," says Ferrara in the press notes. "It's about the human soul." Tidings of comfort and joy.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for L.A. Weekly.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

by Austin Baer

MYSTERY OF THE KEYBOARD



Mitsuko Uchida

he daughter of a Japanese diplomat, Mitsuko Uchida landed in Vienna at 12, began serious study of the piano, and stayed behind for further study when her father moved on. At 20, she took first prize at the Vienna Beethoven Competition. In Warsaw, she placed second in the Chopin. Her most celebrated accomplishments have been complete cycles of the Mozart piano sonatas and concertos (recorded for Philips). Today she lives in London.

Japan and London: detachment, reserve. Vienna: charm. And prizes to guarantee technique.

Try again. Uchida's one-of-a-kind style transcends such stereotypes, though it does not altogether contradict them. Hers is an elegance that seems oblivious of effect, an abandon that operates within the boundaries of decorum. An American tour brings Uchida to East Lansing, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Los Angeles with a recital program including Beethoven, Schumann, Webern, and Schubert (December 1 to 15).

MIDSUMMER NIGHT IN MIDWINTER

Operas on Shakespearean subjects are innumerable. Operas that use Shakespeare's own words are few. His sound and sense make their own music, too densely textured to bear easily the overlay. The most frequent nineteenth-century strategy in adapting Shakespeare to the opera house was to reduce his action to operatic commonplace, his language to operatic cliché. Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff* stand alone: Shakespearean by virtue of the richness of the drama, Shakespearean too in the splendor of the language, which

is no slavish line-by-line translation of the English dialogue but songful, inspired Italian paraphrase. Seven decades later, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Benjamin Britten proved that results of comparable merit could be achieved with Shakespeare's own language, though he abbreviated the text ruthlessly, sometimes barbarously. The popularity of Britten's goblin-haunted score waxes apace. The latest of several American revivals is now at the San Francisco Opera (November 29 to December 12, 415-864-3330).

SOUNDS OF THE RENAISSANCE REVISITED



Peter Phillips

The sacred music of the Renaissance—unaccompanied voices singing ornate counterpoint—would seem, on the face of it, an enthusiasm for the academic few, but Peter Phillips and his Tallis Scholars are enchanting multi-

tudes. They tour widely, and even have their own best-selling record label. Unlike many other laborers in the Earlie Musicke vineyard, Phillips is no pedant, seeking to bring back the past by perpetuating what is merely obsolete. Women sing soprano with the Tallis Scholars, not boys (as the Church, not musical necessity, once

ordained). The first requirement of the material is accuracy of intonation—a requirement the singers fulfill to a degree bordering on the preternatural. Even more impressive is their tone: instead of the sharp, pinlike brilliance of rival madrigalists, they offer a smooth pearlescence, voices gliding one against the next like streams of liquid light and darkness visible. In music of such as Tomkins, Allegri, Palestrina, and Byrd, not to mention Tallis—masters the world at large would be content to pass by but for them—the Tallis Scholars open vistas on a sublimity not of this earth. Their current tour includes dates in Stanford, Seattle, Birmingham, Nashville, New York, Boston, and Toronto. For the informative brochure of their recordings, on the Gimell label, call Harmonia Mundi (310-559-0802).

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

CZECH MATES

s most people who were there agreed, the concert performance of Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa* at Carnegie Hall on March 30, 1988, ranked with the supreme operatic accomplishments of many a season. Gabriela Beňačková, from the composer's native Czechoslovakia, sang the Moravian girl who loses her heart and honor to a weak, handsome scoundrel. The Viennese Leonie Rysanek, 40 years into a legendary career, appeared as her stepmother, a pillar of rectitude driven to child murder by shame and despair. Janáček's unsparing truthfulness and compassion were matched on this occasion by like virtues in his interpreters. This season, Beňačková and Rysanek revisit their roles together at New York's Metropolitan Opera (December 19, 23, and 26 matinee, and January 2, 8, and 11). Home listeners may catch them on the live Texaco broadcast on December 26 (1:30 p.m., EST) or on the live recording from Carnegie Hall (available on the Bis label).

FOR DIAGHILEV



The Philadelphia Orchestra

"I look back on as the turning point of my life," Balanchine wrote years after he created it for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The "discipline and restraint" of Stravinsky's score were "a revelation" to him. "I began to see how I could clarify, by limiting, by reducing what seemed to be multiple possibilities to the one which is inevitable." This aesthetic also informs the composer's *Oedipus Rex*, a surprise for Diaghilev in 1927. "*Un cadeau très macabre*," Diaghilev remarked: "A very grim gift." The critics, too, turned up their noses. "I know that the *Oedipus* music is valued at zero by present progressive-evolutionary standards," Stravinsky said in 1963, "but...I love it, *all of it*." Now, it needs no excuse. The Philadelphia Orchestra pairs the ballet score and the opera at home (December 3 to 5, 215-893-1999) and in New York (December 8, 212-247-7800).

DANCE

by Laura Jacobs

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S NUTCRACKER

Leave it to Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky to fold elegy and farewell into a Grand Marnier soufflé, and to season it with a hint of heaven. He found his secret ingredient in Paris, where Auguste Mustel had just patented it. And he wrote his publisher, asking to have one ordered for his new ballet, but hush hush, so no other composer would steal his thunder. Or rather, his Sugar Plum Fairy. The instrument was the celesta, and what Tchaikovsky called its "sugary bell-like tone" has come to symbolize the spirit of the ballet that turns 100 this month: *The Nutcracker*.

Tchaikovsky's celesta calls to its cousin, Mozart's glockenspiel. One hundred years before the 1891 *Nutcracker* commission, Mozart composed *Die Zauberflöte*, an opera in which magic bells also figure as a feminine influence in a score that seriously toys with death. In fact, both men died within a year of these premieres—those silvery bells tolled for them.

Nutcracker's Act II *grand pas de deux* reflects the rough year Tchaikovsky was having. His sister died while he was traveling and his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, withdrew her support without explanation. In self-pity masked as exasperation, Tchaikovsky wrote to his librettist, "How the devil do you expect me to write music to express a kingdom of lollipops?"

Yet he did that and more. In the *grand pas* he composed an eloquent acquiescence to the claims of the coffin, a lullaby to heated childhood dreams. Rather than place a white rose on the earth, however, he offered us the Sugar Plum Fairy's celesta variation, which bobs beyond reach—an airy icon, matriarchy eternal. Sugar Plum's softly persuasive voice, her argument wrapped in lamb's wool, reasons with God—and wins. It's no wonder we can't go a year without *Nutcracker*.

This month, *Dance Magazine* lists 232 *Nutcrackers*—a conservative estimate. The best belongs to New

York City Ballet. No tree grows as splendidly, dimensionally, breathtakingly as NYCB's (November 27 to January 3)—and the most glittering gift under that tree is bounding, darting Margaret Tracey as Dewdrop. The San Francisco Ballet, which presented America's first *Nutcracker*, in 1944 (Willam Christensen's), is now on its fourth version (December 15 to January 3). The company recently welcomed Tina LeBlanc into its ranks—the finest Sugar Plum in the country. The Joffrey Ballet performs its Victorian *Nutcracker* at Minneapolis's Northrop Auditorium (November 27 to December 6) and the Kennedy Center Opera House (December 9 to 20). The Ruth Page *Nutcracker* at Chicago's Arie Crown (December 11 to 30) offers guest artists from American Ballet Theatre.



You'll have to wait until *next* season for it, but New York City Ballet will honor *The Nutcracker* with a new feature film of the Balanchine ballet—not the first American *Nutcracker* but without question the most influential. Macaulay Culkin, of *Home Alone* fame, stars as the prince (the overture of his Christmas hit has something of *Nutcracker's* stardust). Karinska's costumes, almost edible, are standouts; Sugar Plum's tutu is a color that must be seen to be appreciated. Some say it's pistachio, but I always think of a line by Mary McCarthy, in which she described the icing on a cake as "Paris green"—but of course.

The Nutcracker has grown so large that it can no longer confine itself to the theater. For those who need it year round, or who are looking for a good gift, here's a selection of new releases and classic renditions on video.

American Ballet Theatre/Mikhail Baryshnikov: A Christmas classic, not least because of Misha's hourglass legs in spanking white tights. A Freudian *Nutcracker*, it culminates in a *pas de trois* among Clara,



Baryshnikov

a patriarch (Drosselmeyer), and a prince—her affections "transfer" from the older to the younger. The ballet's color scheme is sour pastel, like candies left too long in a pocket, but Baryshnikov wields his sword with snowfire and the final frame, Gelsey Kirkland's grave gaze reaching through a window pane, is a perfect ingenue ache.

Paris Opera Ballet/Rudolf Nureyev: Rudi's staging is more flamboyantly Freudian than Misha's—the rats rip off Clara's clothes—and less yearning. But the production boasts a gorgeous winter garden for the Snow Scene, and contains a famous, impossible pose in which the ballerina nestles upon the prince's arabesque—a heroine riding the wind.

Mark Morris Dance Group: It's called *The Hard Nut*, and it's a send up—*Nutcracker à La Cage aux Folles*. Morris has set his version in sixties and seventies tackyland—bell-bottoms and knee-high boots are glamour dos. The Act One party, however, is full of don'ts: fishy cocktails and throbbing hormones. Airing on PBS (on December 16 at 8:30 p.m. EST), this is Morris at his most adolescent.

The Bolshoi Ballet: Distinguished only by the testosterone jolt of Irek Mukhamedov—he of the hawk brow and shadow-casting wingspan. Yuri Grigorovich's insipid staging is so lacking in story you could forget that this was Petipa's most minutely mapped out collaboration with Tchaikovsky. (Example: "The tree lights up. The music sparkles for eight measures.")

Pacific Northwest Ballet: The looming grotesques of Maurice Sendak meet the willowy blonds of the West Coast. An attractive, somewhat sanitized *Nutcracker*.

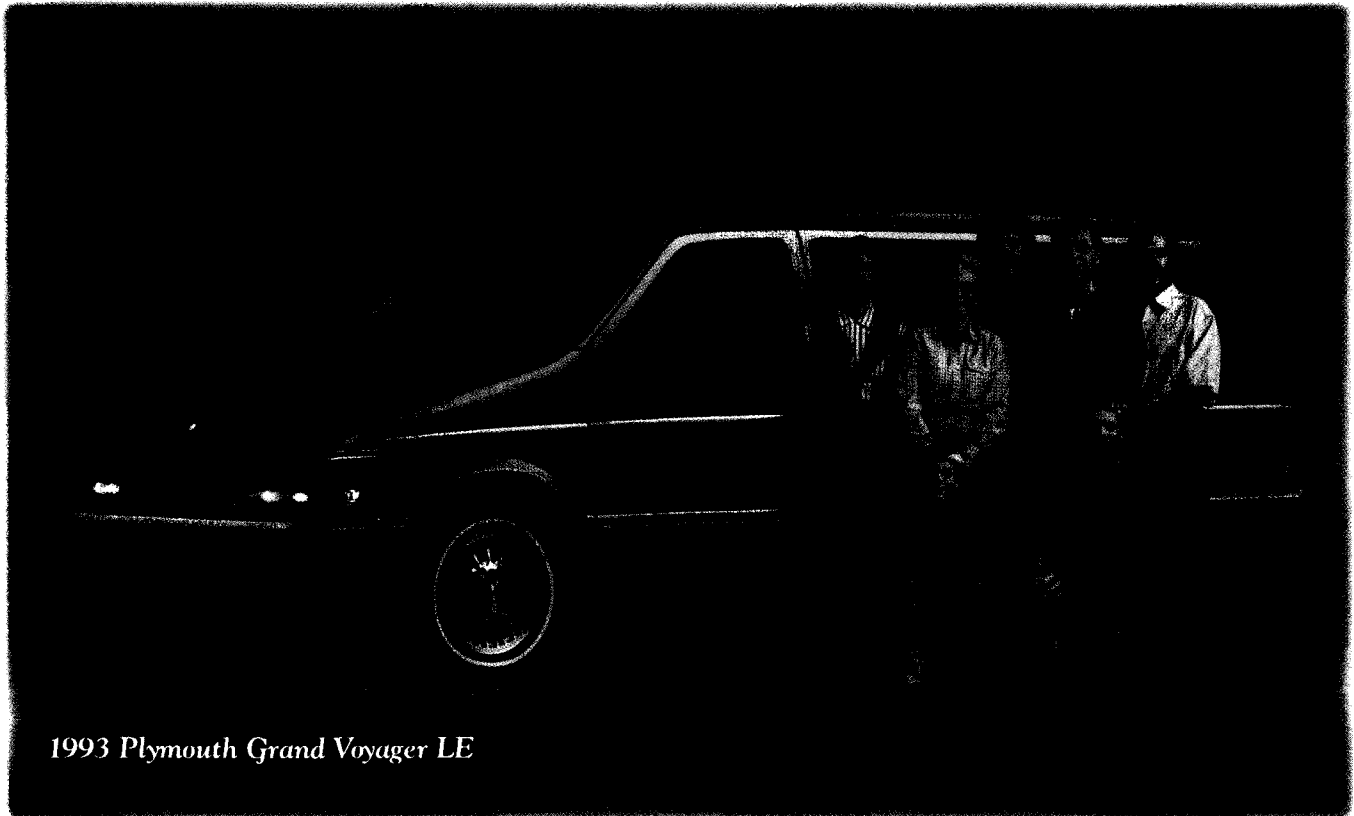
Laura Jacobs is the editor-in-chief of Stagebill and a dance critic for The New Leader.



A Joffrey rendition

York City Ballet. No tree grows as splendidly, dimensionally, breathtakingly as NYCB's (November 27 to January 3)—

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POPULAR MUSIC AND JAZZ

by Charles M. Young and Bob Blumenthal

THAT BUCK JUST DOESN'T STOP



Buck Owens

Buck Owens is that rarity in popular music: a guy with a truck-load of talent who never drove it into a ditch full of booze and drugs. A teetotaler, he achieved his legend by living for a long time and reaching his potential, arriving at concerts on schedule with one of the tightest and most influential bands in the history of country music,

releasing an astonishing string of 15 consecutive No. 1 records from 1963 to 1967. And that was just a fraction of the great material he recorded. Clear of eye and mind, he also read his contracts, and he can claim an even rarer accomplishment as he strides toward old age: he owns and controls his own catalogue, which he has assembled into the *Buck Owens Collection (1959-1990)* (Rhino), a three-CD boxed set with 62 cuts and not a dud among them.

If you thought this guy was a hopeless hambone from his stint as co-host of the dread *Hee-Haw*, give yourself the pleasure of a re-evaluation. Owens and his Bucka-

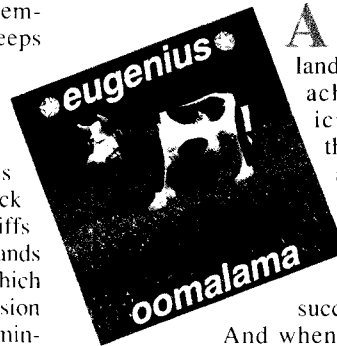
roos pioneered the stripped-down "honky tonk" sound—defined by the biting twang of the early solid-body Fender Telecaster—that lives today in the music of "new traditionalists" like Dwight Yoakam. With twists of irony both sad ("Mental Cruelty") and hilarious ("Waitin' in Your Welfare Line"—no put down of the poor), Owens can tell a story in two minutes and 30 seconds along with the very best. His open-minded appreciation of rock and roll shines through in his powerful rhythms, and his perfect-pitch control of the melody lines will make you want to sing along throughout. —C.M.Y.

STILL PLUGGED IN

Some musicians are artistic extroverts who spend their careers searching for new styles and noises. And some musicians are artistic introverts who find one sound they really, really like and beat it to death forever. AC/DC fall into the second category. Indeed, they define the second category, because they haven't changed *anything* since they started the band, in 1974. Rhythm guitarist Malcolm Young even plays the same guitar that he played then. They invariably stay within the pentatonic minor "blues" scale that is responsible for rock's greatest riffs and most off-putting clichés. Other guitar heroes have long since expanded into exotic Arabian-

sounding scales to avoid boring themselves out of a job. But the band keeps hammering the same nail.

So why is *AC/DC Live* (ATCO) such a terrific live album? Because the nail they're hammering is a really, really great nail. Something in Malcolm's brain is plugged in to the heart of rock and roll, and he is able to turn simple riffs into hypnotic grooves that in other hands would annoy with colossal tedium. Which is why you should buy the two-CD version of *AC/DC Live* that clocks in at 134 minutes, as opposed to the one-CD, 74-minute version. You get a whole lot more groove for just a little more money. —C.M.Y.



GREAT SCOTS

A quartet from Glasgow, Scotland, eugenius first achieved a modicum of fame as the Vaselines by attracting the attention of Kurt Cobain, the leader of the hugely successful Nirvana.

And when the Vaselines evolved into Captain America, Cobain even had them open for Nirvana on their European tour. When Marvel Comics claimed copyright infringement on the character of the same name, they became eugenius, after guitarist/singer/songwriter/leader Eugene Kelly. And now we have the album *oomalama* (Atlantic) before they change their name again.

Their sound is too pop to be grunge, and too grunge to be pop, meaning the guitars are distorted, the bass is mixed high, and you can't understand the vocals most of the time. Thus it is muddy enough to qualify as grunge. But they have catchy riffs and melodies you can hum, and they're danceable if you like dancing to a live rock-and-roll beat (as opposed to the drum machines in most current dance music). Thus it is accessible enough for pop. The title cut has no lyric, just an endlessly chanted "oomalama," which is nonetheless a very catchy oomalama, one of the best oomalamas you'll ever hear, probably. Also recommended, despite its regrettable dearth of oomalama: "flame on," about burning your diary. The group will be touring on the small-club and college circuit. —C.M.Y.

HAWAIIAN SPECIALTY: PAHINUI ON RY

Because of his deep respect and affection for a wide variety of ethnic music, Ry Cooder has developed one of the most identifiable guitar styles extant. Nobody comes close to his list of influences. One of the most prominent on that list is Gabby Pahinui, a Hawaiian master of the "slack-key" guitar, a tuned-down style of slide that to mainland ears sounds both exotic and vaguely familiar because of tourist exposure to slack-key in mostly watered-down form. Having played with Pahinui on various projects (*The Gabby Pahinui Hawaiian Band* in 1975, and Cooder's *Chicken Skin Music* in 1976) before Pahinui died, in 1978, Cooder felt a special obligation to help keep native Hawaiian music alive.



The Pahinuis

When Gabby's widow told her three sons, Bla, Martin, and Cyril, that it was time to record again, Cooder jumped at the chance to organize, co-produce, and play. The resulting album, *The Pahinui Bros.* (Private Music), is one of the strangest hybrids around: country western, doo wop, rock and roll, reggae, and, of course, the defining slack-key guitar. The cover of John

Lennon's "Jealous Guy" may get the most radio attention, but it's the native music that is the most affecting. The Pahinuis sing wonderfully, hitting the happiness center of your brain with every tune. It's Cooder's strongest work in years, with virtuoso David Lindley also on guitar and Jim Keltner on drums. —C.M.Y.

POPULAR MUSIC AND JAZZ

HERE'S HOLIDAY FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Holiday in the mid-40s

In the realm of jazz reissues, Christmas is the season of the megarelease; and none should be bigger this year than *The Complete Billie Holiday on Verve 1945-1959*, a 10-CD set. The appearance of

this deluxe box, which opens with a few early Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts but focuses primarily on the last seven years of Holiday's life, will renew the debate regarding when jazz's definitive singer after Louis Armstrong was at her best. Did Holiday peak in the thirties, when she was in glorious voice but often merely one

soloist among many in small group jazz settings; the forties, when she was a more mature performer often saddled with questionable pop arrangements; or the fifties, when her voice was ravaged by drugs and alcohol but her interpretive abilities reached new heights? (Listeners now have the opportunity to make their own comparisons. Columbia has issued in nine separate volumes the 1933 to 1942 recordings that made Holiday's reputation, plus a three-disc overview box; GRP collected her complete 1944 to 1950 Decca output in a two-disc set.) Often as painful as they are moving, the Verve recordings find Holiday immersed in her personal agony, and frequently rising above it. She can sound tired, sick, or on the edge, but never dishonest or uninvolved; and accompanists such as Charlie Shavers, Ben Webster, and Jimmy Rowles provide the instru-

mental balm for her unbearable heartache. Verve has included significantly more material than on its 1985 vinyl boxed set. Besides several alternate takes, we get Holiday's 1954 Jazz Club USA concert in Cologne, plus two hour-long rehearsals, one of which is most notable for her renditions of such unlikely material as "Beer Barrel Polka" and "My Yiddish Mamma." The other rehearsal finds her in the company of good friends Rowles and Artie Shapiro, and offers a welcome glimpse of the singer at her happiest. Among the visual features of this package (also available in 16,000 limited-edition numbered copies for collectors and Holiday enthusiasts) are color reproductions of four 10-inch album covers and a 200-page booklet filled with interviews, analyses, rare photos, and even an Oscar Peterson poem. —B.B.

JAZZY GIFTS

For the jazz gift-giver, here are a few alternatives among the new releases. *Black Hope* (Warner Bros.) documents the ongoing growth of alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett, who apprenticed with Art Blakey and Miles Davis. Garrett incorporates funk and electronic touches judiciously in a program of passionate blowing and relentless grooves.

For a more innovative sampling of where jazz composition and performance are headed, *Sideshow* (Arabesque) would be hard to beat. This is the first major national release by 8 Bold Souls, the exceptional octet that saxophonist Edward Wilkerson, Jr., has led in Chicago for near-



8 Bold Souls

ly a decade. With tuba and cello (and no piano), plus atmospheric Wilkerson compositions that are crafted as tautly as short stories, the Souls operate in the same territory as the midsize groups of David Murray and Henry Threadgill, but with a gravity and lyricism that are unique. —B.B.

EXOTIC EXPERIENCE

Anyone with the slightest taste for world music should check out *Kalfou Danjere* (Mango), by Boukman Eksperyans, a nine-person group from Haiti. Their sound has much in common with the township music of South Africa: distinct and exotically melodious vocals, chicken-scratch guitar that makes you laugh for the sheer joy in the playing, and vibrant percussion oriented for dance with a greater charge of adrenaline than in the reggae of neighboring Jamaica.

Recorded in Port-au-Prince, *Kalfou Danjere* reflects the concerns of an exploited people without ever making the listener depressed. In Creole, the title means "dangerous crossroads," a place of judgment in the Vodou religion (also the place where Robert Johnson met the devil in Mississippi 60 years ago), and judgment certainly recurs as a theme throughout the album. They plainly want "deceivers" and "assassins" and everyone who is not a "Ginen"—a spiritually enlightened person—to clean up their karma. But they do not call for retribution against their tormentors. They call for love. From "Vodou... Adjai!": "Capitalism, Communism, Bullshitism/Egotism, Expansionism, Imperialism/A huge system, much racism, fanaticism/Bad money, bloody

wars, orphans/The children won't perish/Babylon will fall/Love is going to rule/For us all to become one/.... To bring greater peace/Christian, Buddhist, Sufi and Hindu/They're all becoming one." For these sentiments,

the government of

Haiti has censored them as

"too violent," and

soldiers often show

up at their concerts

to ensure they don't

sing anything too

subversive. And with

good reason: when the

Haitian people over-

threw Baby Doc Duvalier

they chanted the Boukman

song "Ke M Pa Sote" ("you

don't scare me") in the streets. They sound

good and they're politically correct, so you

have no excuse not to give these guys a

chance. Be not put off by the Creole lyrics. Their message of joy comes through in any language. Boukman Eksperyans is touring North America, playing at festivals and on the small-club circuit, through the end of the year. For more information call 310-288-5327. —C.M.Y.

Charles M. Young is the executive editor of *Musician* magazine.

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe.



THEATER

by Austin Baer

A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION



Children of Paradise

Paris. The Occupation. The brightest stars of the French stage and screen are fighting the Nazis with art, filming the subversive backstage epic *Les Enfants du Paradis*. But whom can you trust? The leading lady, who in the movie embodies the very soul of French resistance, is sleeping with the enemy.... The historic situation, a dramatic mine field, is the subject for *Children of Paradise: Shooting a Dream*, created by the Theatre de la Jeune Lune for the inauguration of its first permanent home, a converted Minneapolis warehouse. An inspired choice: the classic arts of mime and

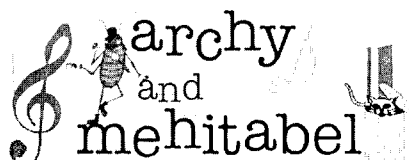
vaudeville showcased in the movie are Jeune Lune specialties, acquired in Paris at the School of Jacques Le Coq and polished at home in 13 previous seasons. After a first run at home, in Minneapolis (November 18 to January 9, 612-333-6200), *Children* transfers to the Yale Rep, in New Haven (January 15 to 30, 203-432-1234).

HATING HAMLET

The plot: straight out of the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveler returns, comes the ghost of John Barrymore, in tights, to coach young Andrew Rally (star of network television's *LA Medical* and the Trailburst Nuggets commercial) as Hamlet. When Paul Rudnick's *I Hate Hamlet* played Broadway last year, Nicol Williamson's outrageous Barrymore kept his colleagues guessing from night to night what liberties he would take this time. Sometimes, bored, he would wander off. Sometimes, contemptuously, he would ad lib. On at least one occasion, the newspapers reported violence. What his performance may have lacked in professional courtesy, it made up in swagger. It was much, much larger than life—exactly the right size. The title of the merry farce may look rude this month on the posters for the high-toned Alabama Shakespeare Festival, in Montgomery, but who knows better the place of over-the-top histrionics than a true Shakespearean? (Through December 13, 800-841-4273.)

BACK-ALLEY BARDS

Before T.S. Eliot, there was Don Marquis. Before *Cats*, there was *archy* and *mehitabel*. The character archy, as readers of the Depression-era *New York Sun* knew, was a *vers libre* bard reborn as a cockroach. His crony, mehitabel, the alley



cat, with the morals and street smarts that implies, was once Cleopatra, or so she claims. "expression is the need of my soul," archy began his first communication—hurling himself head first against the keyboard to type each letter. In the fifties, his jazzy bulletins "from the under side" came to Broadway as a musical, starring Eddie Bracken and the purring Eartha Kitt. Now, these great characters are due back, at the Center Theatre, Chicago (November 19 to December 27, 312-508-5422).

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Craig Lucas's plays are fables for a postfabulous age. *Reckless*, the most graceful and poignant, begins one Christmas Eve with the surreal crackup of a marriage and ends two days before Christmas many years later with the promise of a reunion of a long-lost mother and her troubled son. Given its final form several seasons ago at New York's Circle Rep, it is now the apt seasonal offering of the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, in Little Rock (December 10 to 20, 501-378-0405). Circle Rep, meanwhile, presents Lucas in his latest guise, as the librettist of the chamber opera *Orpheus in Love*. Though written in Lucas's usual lucid vernacular, the script suggests midcentury Paris, a sort of *No Exit* stylishly filtered through Cocteau; just add Milhaud and listen to it fizz. The composer is Gerald Busby, and it remains to be heard how he honors the French connection (November 27 to January 3, 212-924-7100).

IN GARBO'S FOOTSTEPS

When Garbo talked, that goddess of the silents, the words of Eugene O'Neill's sullen prostitute, Anna Christie, were the first she uttered. "Redolent of cardboard," a Garbo-worshiper has written of the material. "The tragedy is all scissors and paste, with a tacked-on happy ending." All true enough. A sailor's daughter brought up and abused on a Minnesota farm, Anna returns to the sea, where she finds redemption in her own flinty integrity and an honest man's love. But apart from the brooding sea symbolism, the action might sound strangely contemporary, like a tale told on *Oprah*. No one is likelier to make it true to life than Natasha Richardson, the remarkable Vanessa Redgrave's remarkable daughter, whose screen portrayal of Patty Hearst transformed the cardboard victim-turned-terrorist of the tabloids into a human enigma. *Anna Christie*, with the Roundabout Theater, marks her Broadway debut (December 23 to February 21, 212-869-8400).



Anna Christie

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.



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On December 6, at 10 p.m. EST, the award-winning Arts & Entertainment Network, with the generous sponsorship of Chrysler, will present an episode of the British drama *The House of Eliott*. Now in its second season, this series about Beatrice and Evangeline Eliott, sisters who overcome lack of education and money to found a successful fashion house in 1920s London, has already been critically acclaimed in both the U.S. and Great Britain. For a chance to win a free year's subscription to the A&E Network's journal, respond to this month's poll. The first 100 cards postmarked will win.



(Continued from page 38)

valleys by the clear streams that flow from the Kurdish mountains. My escort explained that such picnics had been forbidden under the Ba'ath, because the entire countryside had been off limits.

Similarly, when we arrived in Sulaimaniya, at dusk, we saw hundreds of people out walking. This, too—a stroll in the cool evening air—had been impossible under the Ba'ath. Young men had feared arrest and young women had hesitated to venture out alone.

At the summer home of the Iraqi Vice President, which now serves as the Irbil headquarters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, a picture of a smiling, bespectacled Jalal Talabani was perched on a chair at the entrance, while guerrillas who had spent the past decade waging a difficult campaign against Baghdad from their mountain hideouts lounged comfortably about the house and grounds, taking particular pleasure in the sweet ripe apricots in the Vice President's extensive orchard.

IN OCTOBER of last year, when Saddam Hussein imposed a blockade on the north, he also halted the payment of salaries to government officials there, ordering them back to Iraqi-held territory. Arabs working in the north obeyed, but Kurdish officials remained at their posts. That is when the Kurdistan Front, the coordinating body for the various Kurdish parties, took over the administration of northern Iraq, assuming responsibility for paying the salaries of essential workers, such as policemen and garbage men, and providing subsidized rations to the population. But those in what are considered to be less essential government jobs, among them schoolteachers, are paid only sporadically, and Kurdistan Front rations have to be supplemented in the market. Many people are living off their savings, and this winter there will be shortages of food and fuel.

Truck traffic from Turkey illustrates the local ingenuity in handling otherwise daunting economic problems. Iraq offers gasoline for sale in Mosul at less than one cent a liter. Turkish trucks come with huge containers strapped to their sides to pick up the gas. They are, in turn, required to bring in food at subsidized prices. Without the essentially free oil, the flow of food into Iraq would be a trickle. Some food gets dropped off in the north, and the rest is carried into

Iraq proper. That oil trade violates the UN embargo, but sensibly no one complains, because the population would otherwise starve. The Kurdistan Front generates income by taxing the trucks on their way to Mosul, although revenues fall far short of what is needed.

Many obstacles to normal economic activity exist in Iraqi Kurdistan. Because of the two embargoes—from the UN and from Baghdad—there is no credit or banking system. Most transactions take place in five- and ten-dinar notes, the equivalent of thirty-three and sixty-six cents. People carry huge wads of bills. Nevertheless, the supply and distribution system has not broken down, as it did in the former Soviet Union. The Middle East has a long commercial tradition.

The embargoes also interfere with private-sector activity. Kurdish peasants could not obtain seed, fertilizer, or pesticides for the last harvest. As a result, the crop was about half what it might have been. One peasant family explained to me that they had used old seed for the summer harvest. They were eating seed that was still older to supplement their rations. If they did not get supplies for the next planting season, there would be no harvest.

Similarly, kerosene for heating looked to be in seriously short supply. Reserves were largely consumed last winter, the harshest in living memory. Irbil's chief petroleum engineer explained the problem to me, using his personal circumstances as illustration. He began last winter with six barrels of kerosene. In June he had half a barrel and did not know how he would obtain more.

INCREDBLY, the Kurds' economic problems are not necessary. Rather, they are a consequence of the mindless application of the UN embargo to northern Iraq. Formally, the embargo exists to force Saddam Hussein to comply with the UN resolutions; the scarcely concealed goal is to oust him. But because he does not control the north, enforcing the embargo there does not hurt him. In fact, it strengthens his position, for the greater the prosperity of areas not under his control, the greater the dissatisfaction inside Iraq proper and the more pressure on the dictator.

Iraqi Kurdistan has oil fields that, were it not for the embargo, could be developed within a year, generating income and much-needed fuel. The rea-

son for maintaining the embargo on northern Iraq is to conciliate traditionalists in Turkey who are nervous about an independent Kurdish state and wary of any differentiation between the north and Iraq proper.

Yet there are really two lines of thought in Turkey. Some civilian politicians are more forthcoming with the Kurds, both Iraq's and Turkey's own. Some of them believe that concessions to Kurdish sentiments are the best counter to the Marxist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), whose terrorist campaign in southeastern Turkey has escalated dramatically in the past year. They also believe that conciliating Iraq's Kurds will help relations with key European countries that have strong Kurdish constituencies, including France, Great Britain, and Germany. Some politicians, notably the Turkish President, Turgut Ozal, even believe that a humanitarian approach to the Iraqi Kurds could enhance Turkey's strategic position in the region. "Provide Comfort," the coalition operation that established the Kurdish safe-haven zone, was Ozal's idea.

Turkish hard-liners, who are significantly represented in the army and other bureaucracies, would like to see Baghdad's authority re-established over the north. But that would mean a renewal of the Kurdish genocide. Even Saddam Hussein's ouster would not solve the problem. Kurds told me that it was Hussein Kamil, the Iraqi President's son-in-law, who warned the Kurds in their abortive postwar negotiations, "How long will the United States stay? One year? Two years? Five years? Eventually they will go, and then we'll know how to take care of you." Moreover, the return of Ba'athist authority to northern Iraq would likely precipitate another Kurdish flight, recreating the crisis that resulted in the safe havens. Very hard-line elements may hope to seal the border, trapping the population between two armies. Ankara initially tried to do that in 1988, when Baghdad used chemical weapons against the Kurds immediately after the Iran-Iraq war ended, unleashing a flood of refugees. Then, international pressure obliged Turkey to open the frontier. The present risk is that Turkish hard-liners, frustrated at the PKK's continuing terrorism, will persuade themselves that it is better to ride out a wave of international protest than to



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continue battling the PKK under present circumstances.

They are probably wrong on two counts, however. First, letting Baghdad reassert control over the north will not solve their Kurdish problem. Turkish-Iraqi relations will not return to what they were before the Gulf War, when the two countries cooperated against Kurdish insurgents. Relations will remain strained. Saddam Hussein supports the PKK now. He will likely continue to do so as leverage against Turkey, even if he is allowed to return to the north. It would probably be easier for Turkey to reach an agreement on controlling the PKK with the Iraqi Kurds than to reach one with Baghdad—an argument Ozal himself has made.

Second, Iraq's Kurdish leadership says it does not seek independence. The area is landlocked, surrounded by states that oppose Kurdish independence. Although the ability of a people to administer their own affairs successfully might be deemed to warrant independence, the Kurdish demand is for autonomy. The Kurds recognize that independence is practically impossible. That is why they joined with Sunni and Shiite elements last June to form the opposition Iraqi National Congress in an attempt to oust Saddam Hussein, although the immediate result, predictably enough, was to intensify Baghdad's pressure on the north.

The Kurds' overriding objective is that Saddam Hussein not return to the north. I asked what they would do if the coalition remained unwilling to make the effort necessary to oust him. Perhaps they should try to join another country? Turkey is the obvious candidate. Ordinary citizens and the Kurdish leadership both were agreeable to that suggestion. Many, including Massoud Barzani, had already been considering it, and Jalal Talabani subsequently raised the possibility publicly while he was visiting Turkey.

For now the Kurds would like to put Provide Comfort on a more durable foundation. They would like it to be open-ended, not subject to an agreement that must be renewed every six months by Turkey's parliament. The agreement is up for renewal again this month. It is critical that Provide Comfort be continued. The life of a people is at stake.

—Laurie Mylroie

PATRICK ROBERT/STGMA



An unpaid rebel and his means of support

LIBERIA

Between Repression and Slaughter

"Always in the crunch they are not there," says one Liberian about the United States and its share of responsibility for the blood-letting in his country

ON A SATURDAY morning in June the Liberian port of Buchanan was sweltering in the dense tropical humidity of West Africa's rainy season. Four small boys entered a tea shop on the city's main street. Dressed in baggy jeans and grimy T-shirts, not much taller than the loaded AK-47 assault rifles they cradled in their arms, they shuffled heavily in big brown military boots that on them resembled the outsize paws of a puppy. "How the day?" one of them muttered. He lifted his fingers to his mouth. The husband and wife who own the shop dutifully fetched some bananas and buttered some rolls. Without so much as a word of thanks, much less payment, the boys swaggered out into the street, savoring their breakfast as they walked.

Two years after the much-loathed

Samuel K. Doe was captured by a rebel gang and tortured to death, Liberia, a country founded by freed American slaves, and for a century and a half America's closest ally in black Africa, is in thrall to armed children and teenagers, to con artists, embezzlers, and murderers, and to ghosts of its peculiar past.

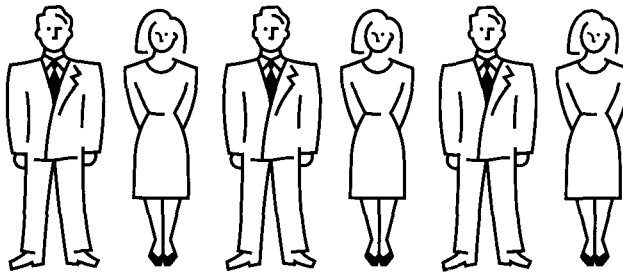
The young boys in Buchanan are soldiers in the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the rebel force that launched a genocidal war against Doe's despotic regime in 1989 and that now controls most of the country outside Monrovia, the capital. They are among the 570 members of the Small Boys Unit, which is attached to the personal security force of Charles Taylor, the rebel leader. They are not paid. They get what they want with their guns. Many of the boys are orphans of the war, Taylor told me the day after I saw them in the tea shop. "Some of them saw their mothers wrapped in blankets, tied up, poured with kerosene, and burned alive. We keep them armed as a means of keeping them out of trouble. It's a means of control."

Charles McArthur Taylor is an American-Liberian, descended from the freed slaves who founded Liberia in 1847. Buchanan, like Monrovia, fifty miles up the coast, was named after an American President. For well over a century Americans acquiesced in and profited from the exclusionary rule of the American-Liberians. For decades Americans trained and equipped the armed forces, which seized power in 1980. The United States then contributed \$500 million in aid, which helped soldiers of Samuel Doe's minority Krahn tribe to bludgeon their rivals into submission. With abuses mounting and alarm bells sounding, U.S. officials were memorably obfuscatory. And when civil war finally came to Liberia, U.S. Navy ships carrying 2,000 Marines floated off the coast as the slaughter intensified, declining to intervene. For Liberians it has been a case of unrequited love.

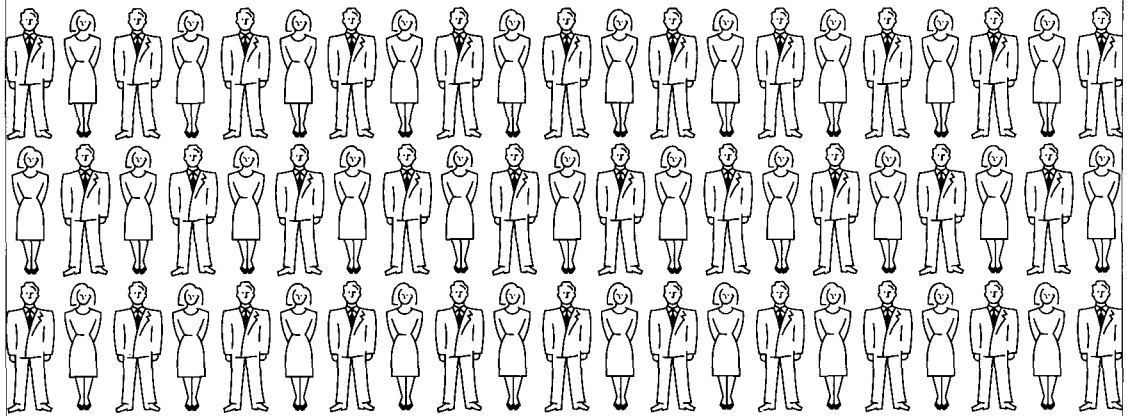
The country is now split, with two governments, two economies, three currencies, and at least four armed factions, including some 20,000 armed "fighters" hustling for survival without pay and with much blood on their hands—for which they would just as soon not be held accountable. Rival militias are proliferating. Profiteers are milking the stalemate and ravaging



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mines and forests. Some 700,000 refugees remain in limbo in neighboring countries. There is no immediate prospect of a peaceful resolution that might reunify the country. Optimistic predictions have consistently proved wrong. Schedules for disarmament and elections have come and gone. The forces at play and interests at stake suggest to many Liberians that protracted military conflict is increasingly likely. "I am getting pessimistic," Amos Sawyer, Liberia's interim President, at the head of a government that controls Monrovia and little else, told me. "I hope to God that I'm wrong."

WHEN I FIRST visited Liberia, in 1986, there was no mistaking a bloody disaster in the making. Samuel Doe had been an unknown, semiliterate twenty-eight-year-old master sergeant when he shot his way into power in 1980. Casting himself as the liberator of Liberia's indigenous masses, he promised to put an end to the corrupt and oppressive domination by the Americo-Liberian elite and to establish a more equitable distribution of the nation's wealth. He pledged to return the country to civilian rule. But he soon proved to be a lawless and brutal tyrant. In October of 1985 he brazenly stole the election that was to have ushered in civilian rule. A month later he put down a widely applauded and nearly successful coup attempt with horrific violence, killing hundreds—mostly members of the Gio and Mano tribes, from the remote border region of Nimba County.

Doe's signature innovation was to ethnicize the armed forces of Liberia, stacking the officer corps and key units with Krahn. In the manifold upheavals of Doe's decade-long rule, Krahn soldiers responded to repeated protests, plots, and failed coups by murdering, raping, and pillaging on a huge scale. After the failed coup of November 12, 1985, Krahn soldiers rounded up hundreds of Gios and Manos presumed to have supported the coup attempt. Eyewitnesses told harrowing stories. The coup leader, a Gio man, was captured, castrated, and dismembered. "I fear," a Gio historian told me when I visited Nimba County in March of 1986, "that if and when this man [Doe] is violently removed from power, it will be recorded in history that there was once a tribe called Krahn in Liberia."

Doe by then was also well on his way to bankrupting the country. It is estimated that in ten years he and his cronies stole about \$300 million—an amount roughly equal to half the anemic gross domestic product for their final year at the till. Doe himself amassed a BCCI account in London worth \$5.6 million. Liberia's distinctive American panache helped him establish a lucrative money-laundering racket—the U.S. dollar remains legal tender. At a time when Liberia's legitimate economy was contracting almost by half, the number of banks in Monrovia rose from six to fourteen.

Yet even those who predicted all-out civil war scarcely imagined the depths to which Liberia would finally descend

in 1990. Charles Taylor's rebellion began with barely 150 insurgents. In less than a year it consumed not just Doe but many thousands of civilians in an orgy of killing and destruction. More than a million Liberians—half the population—abandoned their homes. Much of the country was bombed, burned, and looted into ruins.

Taylor's war had been widely popular when it began. Everyone wanted to get rid of Doe. But Taylor's method was to exploit the genocidal rage of the Gio and the Mano. He began with mostly Gio exiles, including Sam Dokie, now Taylor's Minister of Internal Affairs. Dokie had been in exile for six years, after twice failing to topple Doe. Two of his brothers had been murdered by Doe's Krahn agents; one of them, Lewis Dokie, was flogged to death after the 1985 coup attempt. "We all came back with that revengeful attitude," Sam Dokie told me during my most recent visit, "that what was done to us must be done to them to pay the Krahn people back. So we fought a very bitter war."

Doe, predictably, responded with a counterinsurgency force, mostly Krahn, that went on yet another rampage in Nimba County, killing, looting, raping, maiming, burning villages, driving tens of thousands of Gios and Manos into the bush. The result was exactly what Taylor might have hoped for. Gios and Manos by the thousands rushed to join Taylor's forces. And he welcomed them. "As the NPFL came in," Taylor told me, "we didn't even have to act. People came to us and said, 'Give me a gun. How can I kill the man who killed my mother?'" Within months the band of 150 trained insurgents had snowballed into a marauding force of thousands, mostly illiterate, barely trained but heavily armed, seeking liberty, vengeance, and booty.

No one has the slightest idea how many people died in the ensuing bloodbath. Conservative estimates put the number of casualties at 20,000 to 25,000. That would be about one percent of Liberia's population of 2.5 million. But a visitor soon realizes that virtually everyone lost a relative. I took a poll of the staff at the El Meson hotel in Monrovia. Harrison, the laundry man, had a brother killed in crossfire between the army and the NPFL; his father died of sickness and starvation. Saybah, the chambermaid, lost two brothers and her father to the army. Boakai Sambollah,



Monrovia, 1990. Combatants proclaimed, "We fight to loot" and "No Doe, no Monrovia"

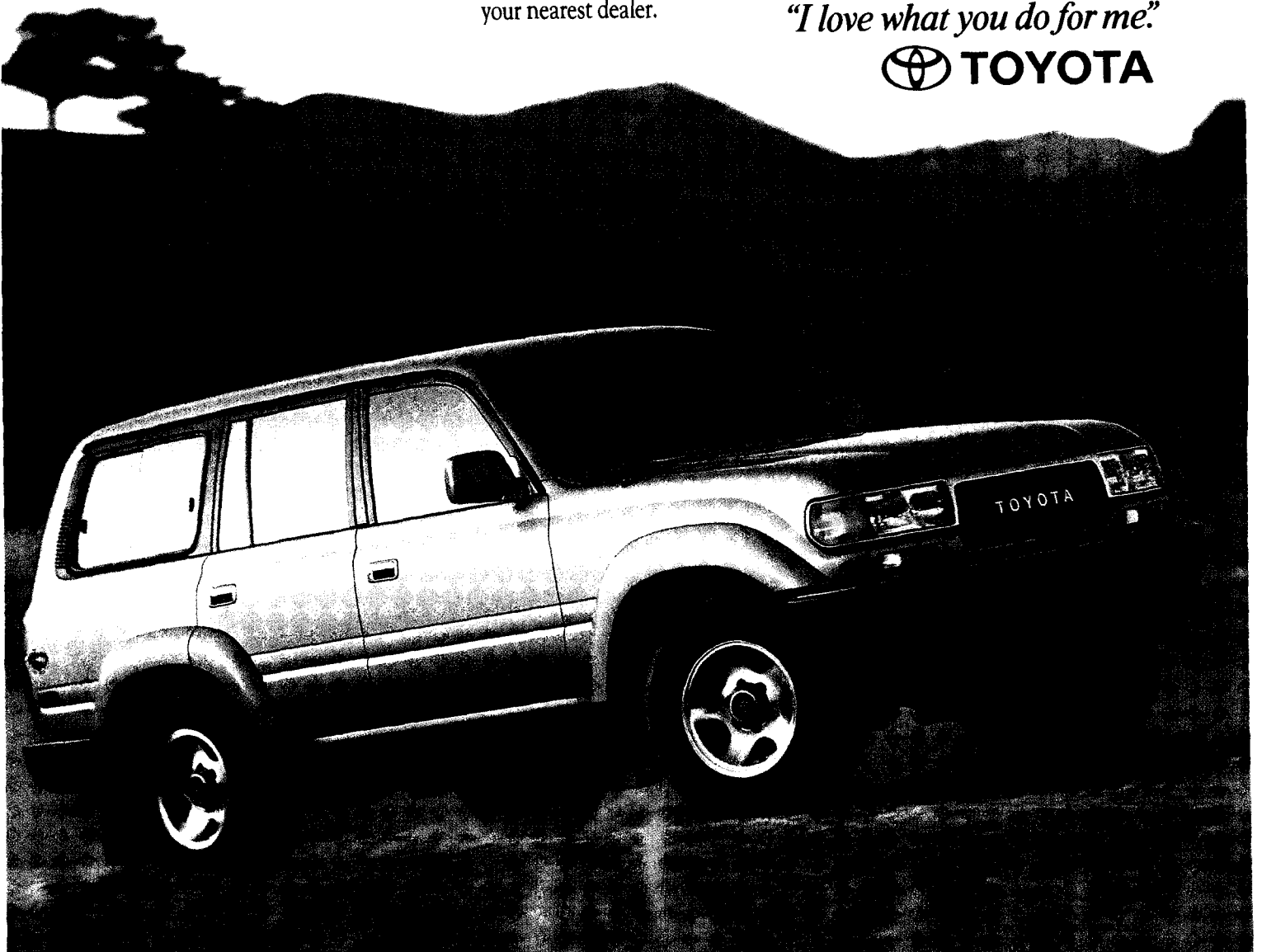
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the maintenance man who managed to produce hot running water in my room on my last weekend, lost a first cousin in an NPFL ambush—"They wanted his car and he refused to give it, so they shot him dead," he said—and his brother-in-law died of cholera. Wleh Nypen, a security guard, lost his brother, a rebel fighter, in a clash with ECOMOG, the West African peace-keeping force that guards Monrovia; his mother died of cholera. Rebecca, a receptionist, lost a cousin to starvation. Joseph, her weekend replacement, lost a brother and a sister, the sister's husband, who was Krahn, and their three children—all killed by Taylor's men; the grown-ups were shot, he said, and the children had their throats slit.

Doe's home county, Grand Gedeh, was decimated. More than 100,000 Krahn refugees fled into neighboring Ivory Coast, telling stories of wanton murder. The climactic battle for Monrovia, in the summer and fall of 1990, degenerated into a slaughter. Water stopped running. Electricity was cut off. Food ran out. Civilians scavenged for weeds. NPFL rebels, high on marijuana and weirdly decked out in women's wigs and dresses looted from stores ("We fight to loot" was their motto), shot people who "smelled" Krahn. Krahn soldiers committed epic massacres, at one point killing 600 Gio refugees holed up in a Lutheran church. As civilians fled, soldiers and rebels alike looted virtually every building: homes, stores, offices, government ministries, hospitals, embassies, churches—and banks. Nearly \$100 million in cash disappeared, almost half of all the money in circulation. After Doe was finally captured and killed, surviving Krahn soldiers set about burning the city down. "No Doe, no Monrovia" was *their* motto.

Doe was killed not by Taylor but by a breakaway rebel faction led by Brigadier General Prince Y. Johnson, a former Taylor ally who managed to beat him to the capital. Johnson is by all accounts an alcoholic psychopath, renowned for personally executing friends and foes alike in fits of pique. In September of 1990 Johnson's rebels ambushed Doe as he was paying a visit to the headquarters of ECOMOG. They took him back to their base, where they conducted a frenzied, boozy interrogation that was recorded on videotape.

The hour-long video is readily avail-

able in Monrovia. It is a lurid document. Doe sits on the ground, naked and flabby, with his legs stretched out before him, bloodied from a gunshot wound. His elbows are bound tightly together behind his back. A swarm of sweaty, glassy-eyed rebels circle the unfortunate despot, shouting and hooting in derision. "What? What?" Doe says repeatedly, straining to hear the questions above the din. "What did you do with the Liberian people's money?" Johnson demands, cracking open yet another can of beer. "Prince, gentlemen, we are all one," Doe pleads. "Cut off his ears!" Johnson cries, and the troops set upon the howling prisoner with machetes. Doe is said to have "died of his wounds."

LIBERIA'S WAR was not a purely tribal affair. Many victims of the NPFL were not Krahn but were people of means, targeted because they wore fine clothes or lived in nice houses. Government functionaries, merchants, and especially Mandingoes—Muslims known for their entrepreneurial skills—were all presumed to have collaborated with Doe. The Krahn suffered disproportionately not just because they were Krahn but because their leaders appropriated an inequitable and oppressive system and exaggerated its worst features. The Americo-Liberians built that system. Ultimately the Krahn, traditionally one of Liberia's poorest tribes, took the fall for more than a century of simmering hatred born of envy. It is a sinister irony that Charles Taylor and many who bankrolled his war against that system are themselves Americo-Liberians and others who had been born or co-opted into the ruling caste.

"We have been angry for a long time," said Blamo Nelson, who heads SELF, a homegrown relief organization that now feeds Monrovia. Nelson's mother starved to death during the war. "Look at the Doe video. I identified with those crazy people. We all wear masks. Behind those masks is a mad, horrified people."

Patrick Seyon, the president of the University of Liberia, who in 1981 was flogged twice a day for eight days by Doe's agents, emphasized the deep historical roots of the war. "Those who found themselves in power after 1980 went along with the world that had been set in place by the freed American slaves," Seyon said. "No one saw

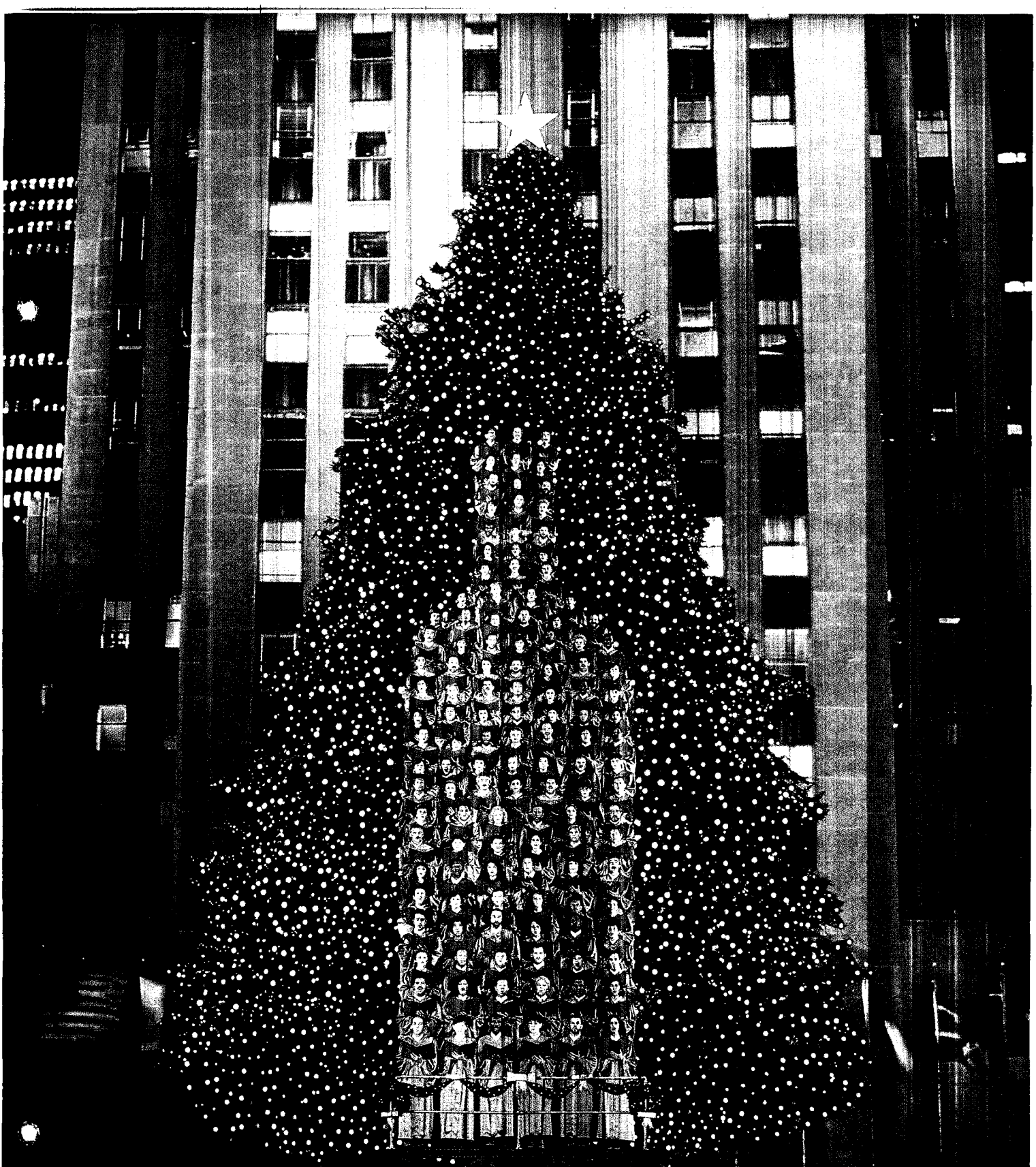
that there was something systemic in the level of inequality that existed. They followed right in line."

The university campus is a modest collection of tan cement-block buildings directly across the street from the executive mansion, on the edge of downtown Monrovia. It has been a focal point of conflict for years. In the 1970s it was the scene of mounting disension against the Americo-Liberian regime of William R. Tolbert. In the 1980s the campus was roiled by repression and protest under Doe. Then, in the summer of 1990, the university was occupied by Taylor's forces, seeking in vain to take the mansion. The campus suffered heavy damage and extensive looting, and was closed for two years.

Alaric Tokpa, the chairman of the political-science faculty, is a former student leader who was jailed by Doe and sentenced to be executed by firing squad. His sentence was commuted and he later spent five months in the notorious Belle Yella work camp for distributing leaflets on the campus. Tokpa invited me to meet with a class, which grew to more than a hundred students eager to share their views with an American visitor.

I asked them how many believed that the United States had backed Doe's coup in 1980. A hundred hands went up. Then I asked how many believed that the United States was behind Taylor's invasion in 1989. Again, a hundred hands. How many believed that the United States was behind Prince Johnson when he broke away from Taylor and beat him to the capital? Roars of laughter. What a naive question, the students said—of course the United States was behind Johnson. Finally I asked how many believed that the United States should have intervened directly to stop the war. Here there was a diversity of opinion. A small minority said no.

The students' views were remarkable as much for what they said about Liberians as for what they said about America. There is no hard evidence to support their suspicions. Yet the perception that Americans pull strings behind every scene is widely shared in Liberia. Many believe that the United States could solve Liberia's problems if only it had the will. "The U.S. could have sent in a hundred Marines and everyone would have listened to them," Taylor told me. When I repeated this to Amos Sawyer, he said, "I agree."



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Four boys accused of theft await an uncertain fate from a self-appointed judge

AMERICA has in fact been a central player in Liberia ever since the freed slaves arrived in 1822. Liberia was the brainchild of the American Colonization Society—white Americans with mixed motives, some philanthropic, others nakedly racist. Not a few of them feared the likely results of emancipation, and they sought to establish a mechanism for ridding the United States of slavery's progeny. The small number of black pioneers who took up the society's offer and returned to Africa likewise had mixed motives: some were missionaries, some were entrepreneurs, and some merely despaired of a better life in America. Their small settlement on the Atlantic coast of Africa was secured by a blend of co-optation and coercion.

White governors ruled the settlement on behalf of the Colonization Society until 1847, when Liberia was proclaimed Africa's first independent republic and returned settlers took charge. The new country's motto, "The love of liberty brought us here," survives to this day. But the years of settler rule were characterized by exploitation of the indigenous peoples, who still constitute more than 97 percent of Liberia's population. Half the national income accrued to less than five percent of the citizens. The ruling True Whig Party maintained a kind of feudal oligarchy, monopolizing political power. While the settlers along the coast developed an elaborate life-style reminiscent of the antebellum South, complete with top hats and morning

coats and a society of Masons, the indigenous peasants endured poverty and neglect. Exploitation reached a peak in the 1920s, when high officials in the government were implicated in a flourishing international slave trade and domestic forced-labor market.

Among those linked to forced labor was the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, which operated the world's largest rubber plantation in Liberia. After the First World War, at a time of prodigious growth for the automobile industry in America, Firestone secured a ninety-nine-year lease on a million acres in Liberia. The Liberian elite were experiencing acute economic difficulties and hoped to solidify their position by strengthening their ties to American capital. Firestone, in turn, assured itself of a stable source of rubber by becoming deeply enmeshed in the political and economic culture of the Americo-Liberians. The company provided spacious homes for government officials. It retained True Whig leaders on the company payroll. By 1950 Firestone was responsible for a quarter of Liberia's tax revenues.

The combination of graft and repression reached its peak during the prolonged regime of President William V. S. Tubman, who ruled from 1944 to 1971. Tubman is said to have appropriated more money for ceremonial bands than for public health; he devoted more than one percent of the national budget to the upkeep of his presidential yacht. Tubman created a personality cult based on an elaborate network

of kinship and patronage, personal loyalty, the manipulation and co-optation of tribal chiefs—and force. He built an extensive secret-police network, and laid the foundation for much of what was to come under Doe: an individual autocracy rooted in weak institutions and contempt for the rule of law.

Tubman also established himself as a reliable ally of the United States in the early stages of the Cold War. It was during Tubman's rule that the United States built the Voice of America relay station in Liberia, for broadcasts throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and the Omega navigation tower, for directing shipping up and down the Atlantic coast. Liberia became the main transfer point for intelligence gathered in Africa. U.S. military planes were granted landing and refueling rights on twenty-four hours' notice at Robertsfield, built by Americans during the Second World War.

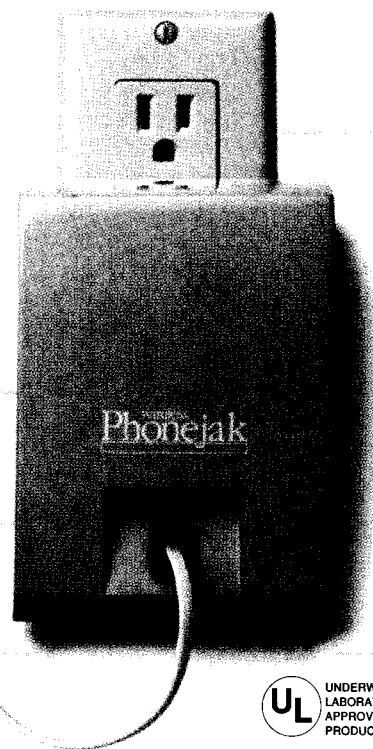
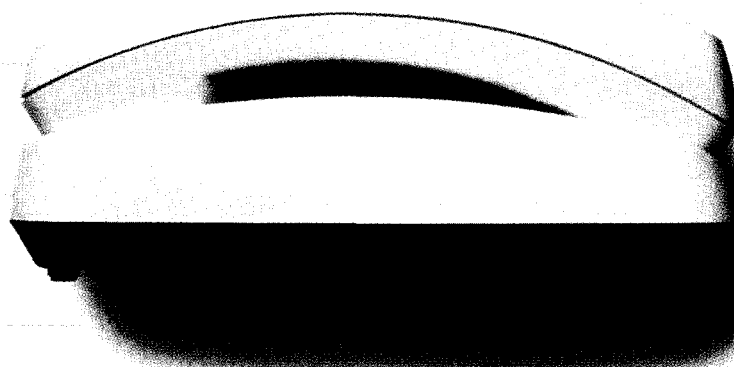
Tubman's successor, William Tolbert, made some effort to liberalize the political machinery, but his reforms merely heightened expectations that could not be satisfied within the existing system. One memorable confrontation in Monrovia—in April of 1979, almost exactly a year before Doe's coup—highlighted the wide gap between the ruling elite and the masses. At a time of intensifying hardship for most Liberians and increasingly ostentatious displays of wealth by the elite, Tolbert announced an increase in the price of rice, the Liberian staple. When it became apparent that Tolbert and members of his family stood to benefit personally from the price increases, thousands of Liberians rose up in a series of street demonstrations in Monrovia. Tolbert ordered the police to open fire on unarmed demonstrators. More than forty protesters were killed and hundreds were injured. The rice riots created a ground swell of ill will from which Tolbert never recovered.

THE AGENT of change was the army. Originally called the Frontier Force, Liberia's army was created in 1908 as a means of securing Liberia's borders against foreign encroachment. President William Howard Taft in 1912 sent the first U.S. training officers to help out. The army assumed two essential responsibilities: tax collection—one might say "taxation without representation"—and suppress-

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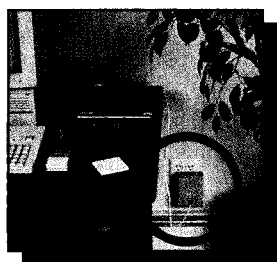
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sion of dissent. In their first century the Americo-Liberians fought twenty-three brutal wars against uprisings, and the United States intervened directly in nine of them. By 1951 the United States had established a permanent mission in Liberia to train the armed forces. Many top officers were sent to America for training. Doe himself was trained by the Green Berets. Its enlisted ranks composed mainly of illiterate peasants, school dropouts, and street toughs, the army was a malignant organism in the body politic.

The nature of the 1980 coup itself was an omen. On April 12, 1980, Doe and his collaborators—the youngest was sixteen—stormed the executive mansion, captured President Tolbert in his pajamas, and disemboweled him. Ten days later, in an indelible public spectacle, thirteen members of Tolbert's Cabinet were tied to telephone poles on the beach and mowed down by a drunken firing squad. There followed weeks of random bloodletting in which hundreds were killed.

"When the coup took place in 1980, it was an exact reflection of the kind of army that the system had produced," Conmany Wessch, an adviser to the interim government who spent the decade under Doe in exile, told me. "Doe was the embodiment of everything that had happened before. The difference with Doe was a difference in scale, not quality. If Tolbert did it twice, Doe did it a thousand times."

Nevertheless, the United States contributed half a billion dollars in economic and military aid in the first five years of Doe's regime—a third of Liberia's operating budget. President Ronald Reagan invited Doe to the White House—though he embarrassed his guest by introducing him to the press as "Chairman Moe." There was concern that the young soldier and his populist backers might tilt toward Libya or even Moscow. There was also an "implicit bargain," as one American diplomat told me at the time, "that the military would let go if its needs were looked after."

But when the military failed to let go, the Reagan Administration did not challenge the results of the rigged election (the Bush Administration later conceded that they were fraudulent), and never publicly called for an investigation of the horrendous abuses that followed. On the contrary, Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, the Administra-

tion's chief spokesman on African affairs, issued a series of unforgettable statements during that critical period, about "positive aspects" of the election and about the standards of "a part of the world where the norm is single-party rule," which Liberians to this day regard as plainly racist. In January of 1987 Secretary of State George Shultz passed through Monrovia and praised President Doe's government for what he called "genuine progress" toward democracy. An unmistakable signal went out that as far as the United States was concerned, Doe and his confederates could quite literally get away with murder. And they did—at least for a few more years.

THE STEAMY port of Buchanan is alive with a bustling commerce that seems difficult to credit in a nation reeling from war. Buchanan today is the commercial heart of "Greater Liberia," the area controlled by Charles Taylor and his collaborators. Taylor once worked for Doe's government, as the head of a government purchasing agency. But he fled the country in 1983, after he was charged with embezzlement, and was jailed in Massachusetts while awaiting extradition. He was accused of stealing \$900,000 by negotiating bogus contracts with his own front company in New Jersey. He escaped from the Plymouth House of Correction by sawing through window bars in the laundry room and lowering himself to the ground on tied bed sheets. He re-

turned to West Africa, survived two more stretches in jail in Ghana and Sierra Leone, and then assembled his band of fighters for training in Libya before finally launching his war against Doe. Denied the brass ring of power when ECOMOG pushed him out of Monrovia, Taylor now presides, albeit unsteadily, over a countrywide regime best described as organized gangsterism.

The NPFL early on evolved into a lucrative money-making enterprise. Foreign investors—mostly French, Italian, German, and Lebanese, but including some Americans—reportedly have paid Taylor millions in "taxes" for the right to exploit Liberia's timber, rubber, iron ore, gold, and diamond reserves. Taylor is said to have personal bank accounts worth millions of dollars in Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, and elsewhere, and he has spent millions more on arms. His NPFL fighters, meanwhile, operate checkpoints and roadblocks where they can extort a better living than they are ever likely to make without guns. Many of them, including the Small Boys Unit, were linked to atrocities during the war and afterward; many have been accused of rape, and of kidnapping and "keeping" women and girls for stretches of as long as a year under threat of death.

There is a great deal of speculation about whether Taylor could actually win a free and fair election. He is, after all, the man who had the wherewithal to topple Doe. And many Liberians regard his ascent to power as inevitable, given the forces at his disposal, and would just as soon let him have power if the alternative is endless stalemate. But Liberians are acutely aware of the brutality of the NPFL. In Buchanan there is palpable tension between the mostly Gio fighters and the mostly Bassa civilian population—another sign that bodes ill for the future. Last March the tension boiled over in street demonstrations after Gio fighters arrested and executed several Bassa men on suspicion of sabotage; Taylor shrewdly allowed the demonstrations to take place, but he did not punish anyone for the executions. A Bassa woman who runs a beer stall in Buchanan—and who, like everyone in the territories under Taylor's control, asked not to be identified—told me, "Everyone in Buchanan is against Taylor." She said her husband was shot and killed by NPFL fighters and her mother starved to death during the war. "They came to fight for our free-

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Charles Taylor and bodyguards



dom and instead they kill us," she said. "When Taylor came into Liberia, he had imbibed the Mafia culture," Boima Fahnbulleh, a former Foreign Minister, told me. "Killing without compunction, terror, reduce the mind to a slave, oppose it and you are dead—it became a way of life. People know they are living a lie, but they must go on living."

Then there is the problem of Taylor's ethnicity. If mostly Gios and Manos fought the war, mostly Americo-Liberians and other elites are now enjoying the fruits: men and women with names like Cooper, DeShields, Eastman, Richardson, and Dennis. They live in Gbarnga in a compound of villas built by USAID and abandoned by expatriate agricultural researchers during the war. Taylor and his friends simply appropriated the compound, fixed it up, and moved in. Now they gather nightly on their screened-in porches, turn on their stereos and VCRs, and sip chilled German wine while unpaid Gio fighters in jeans and flip-flops stand guard.

In midwar Taylor abruptly obtained a new middle name: Ghankay, which means "warrior" in the Gola language. He claims to have Gola ancestry. But journalists seeking to confirm this have been unable to find any Golas who remember him. So Taylor has a problem. He has used the Gio and is beholden to them for his power, not to mention his survival, but he is not of them. At least three attempts on his life have been reported to date. Half a dozen prominent Gio politicians—men who might be seen as having a claim to Gio leadership more legitimate than Taylor's—have been murdered under mysterious circumstances. Among them was Jackson Doe, the man who actually won the stolen election in 1985. Taylor has denied any role in these murders, but few Liberians doubt that he was behind them. In the last major round of peace negotiations Taylor insisted on a provision that would allow him to maintain 150 bodyguards of his own even if the NPFL is disarmed. "The man is a cornered rat," Stanton Peabody, a Reuters correspondent and the dean of Liberia's press corps, told me.

MY INTERVIEW with Taylor took place in the living room of his Buchanan mansion. He was an affable host, dressed casually but stylishly in a white shirt, pinstripe pants, and black oxford shoes. "There was no

other way to get power from Samuel Doe than to resort to arms," he began. "He killed people. He maimed people. He beheaded people. He raped students. He had wrecked the country. Nothing short of arms would have removed him from power."

I asked if it had not been a reckless war. "Quite the opposite," he said. "Doe had sufficiently antagonized the country with a reign of terror. It must be recorded: It took me two active years of preparation. I knew that unless it was controlled, there would have been a bloodbath." But there *was* a bloodbath, I noted. "I must say with a high degree of sincerity," he countered, "they did not go after the Krahn as they would have without the training that we provided."

I asked about accountability for war crimes. He had, after all, cited Doe's crimes as justification for the war. "The whole problem is like the chicken and the egg," Taylor said. "Which came first? We cannot go back and [assign] blame. There are too many skeletons in the closet to begin to apportion blame. Forget blame."

Taylor and the NPFL have engaged in an escalating series of clashes with a rival militia, known as ULIMO, mostly Krahn and Mandingo, which is based in Sierra Leone. Taylor also has provided a base for dissidents from neighboring countries who have aided his rebellion. That is one reason that the neighboring countries have joined together to try to contain him. Already his war has spilled over into Sierra Leone, prompting a coup in that country last spring. There have also been clashes with ECOMOG, which under the latest peace agreement is supposed to be disarming Taylor's forces. In an inauspicious encounter with ECOMOG troops in May, NPFL fighters captured six Senegalese soldiers and murdered them, mutilating their corpses. Disarmament, of course, is a precondition for free and fair elections, and Taylor has pledged to disarm his fighters in a succession of peace agreements. It has not happened. When I asked about his earlier pledges, he told me that "total disarmament is baloney; it will never be achieved."

AMOS SAWYER sipped a Scotch in his modest apartment in the roach- and rat-infested hotel that houses his government in Monrovia, and explained to me why he is pessimistic.

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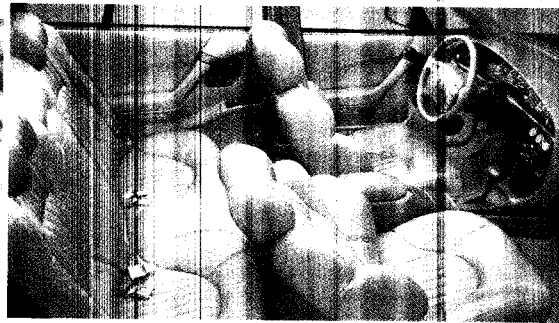
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"We're pursuing the Liberian ideal of democracy as if that were the answer to an insurgency where the quest for power is the overwhelming drive," he said. "If it were a clash of values, or of competing scenarios for the future, then we would be on the right path. But what is at stake is one man's quest for power."

Monrovia today is a gutted and pock-marked vestige of its former self. Nobody is starving anymore—a credit to SELF and to some thirty international relief agencies. The city has the illusory vitality of a population swelled to nearly double its normal size by refugees, half a million traumatized, brutalized people hustling on the thin edge of survival. The productive sector of the economy is finished. There is 80 percent unemployment. When I was there, the civil service had been reduced by half and the remaining workers had not been paid for months.

Sawyer's Interim Government of National Unity, known as IGNU, administers the city, backed by ECOMOG. Installed by Liberia's West African neighbors to restore order and pave the way for elections, IGNU is a coalition of interested parties, well-intentioned and otherwise. Like many coalition governments, it has proved unwieldy. It includes a handful of scholarly idealists like Sawyer at the top, and by all accounts a great many opportunists and profiteers, many of them holdovers from the past, who are milking the stalemate, embezzling millions. To Sawyer's credit, corruption scams are being exposed almost daily by a raucous press, and prosecutions have been initiated by Philip Banks, his Yale-educated Justice Minister. Sawyer, who was jailed under Doe and spent five years in exile in Washington, D.C., and at the University of Indiana, has agreed not to run in the still-unscheduled election. He is a good man by nearly all accounts, but is accused of being ineffective; in fairness, he may be, as befits a scholar, better suited to analyzing Liberia's intractable crisis than to solving it.

Prince Johnson and his gang are confined to a suburban compound. Doe's former troops and some 30,000 dependents are confined to their barracks. Every few weeks the sense of normalcy is shaken by an unexplained grenade attack on a social club or a fire in a newspaper office. Neither at war nor at peace, the people wait edgily for signs

of progress, dreading the day when ECOMOG tires of the stalemate and leaves, opening the door for Taylor and his bunch. In the meantime, virtually the entire population is surviving on food donated by the United States.

"I DO NOT ACCEPT that the United States was in any way responsible for what happened here," says the former ambassador Peter De Vos, who served through much of the war. "It was a Liberian show. To attribute this to the U.S. is beyond the pale. It's a myth, folklore." Conceding that America looms large in Liberian history, he adds, "I think there is a natural assumption among the Liberians that whenever there is something bad, it is not their fault but America's fault. I think it's an excuse."

By the time Liberia's war escalated, it may well have been too late for the United States to intervene constructively. It is difficult to see how U.S. Marines could have waded ashore in Monrovia without being sucked into a quagmire. Certainly there would have been no domestic support for risking American lives in an obscure country that most Americans couldn't find on a map. There is in fact no interest group for Liberia in Washington.

But the United States cannot so easily disavow responsibility for Liberia's tragedy, for if the conflict had its roots in decades of inequity and oppression, America has been a critical player, from the country's founding to Reagan's winking at Doe's electoral subversion. "The United States contributed by helping Mr. Doe to build up his military machinery," Amos Sawyer told me. "And I know from personal experience that when the forces of democracy and human rights tried to mobilize through the election process, the Americans were with us step by step. There was every assurance that the American government was standing behind the democratic forces that seemed to be preparing to unseat Doe. But at the end of the day, when even kids in the streets knew that Mr. Doe had lost the election, where were the Americans? They built up expectations and then abandoned the forces for democracy. Always in the crunch they are not there. Then it becomes a Liberian problem."

Congress finally began to shut off the spigot of aid in 1986, partly because of human-rights concerns, partly because

of budgetary constraints. For now the United States is supporting the efforts of the West African states to work out a solution to the stalemate and providing some financial backing for ECOMOG. Optimists in June pointed to the fact that the cease-fire had held for nearly two years. Roads between Monrovia and Taylor-controlled territory had been open since January. The West African states appeared to be unifying behind a goal of pressuring Taylor to disarm, possibly with sanctions. "There has been tremendous progress," Peter De Vos asserted. But in August ULIMO launched an offensive against Taylor's forces, driving them out of at least two western counties and advancing to within nine miles of Monrovia. Thousands, displaced by the fighting, streamed into the capital. In late September NPFL forces were accused of massacring some thirty people in a suburb of Monrovia. Three ECOMOG peace-keepers were killed in a subsequent clash with the NPFL. The black-market rate for American dollars climbed from ten to nearly twenty times the official exchange rate. Elections were postponed yet again. Talk of sanctions against Taylor evaporated. "The latest outbreak of the Liberian conflict . . . has left a regional peace plan in tatters," Stanton Peabody reported for Reuters.

The country is in a knot. So many people have so much blood on their hands that few are likely to disarm and risk having to answer for what they have done. Not the least consideration for most of the armed protagonists is survival. "Those who seek change through democratic means have limited power," the political scientist Alarie Tokpa says, "because those who control power realize that their continued control is a life-and-death struggle." Meanwhile, more than half a million Liberian refugees remain stranded, destabilizing neighboring countries. Krahn refugees in particular are unlikely to return in the foreseeable future. A generation of children has been brutalized, witnesses to the most extreme violence, educated in little except tribal hatred. "We are sitting on a volcano," says Kofie Woods, the director of Liberia's fledgling Justice and Peace Commission. "We can either cool it or it can heat up and explode all over again."

—Bill Berkeley

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*It isn't yet at a sixties boil, but the emerging conflict
between fortysomethings and twentysomethings will help to define this decade*

THE NEW GENERATION GAP

BY NEIL HOWE AND WILLIAM STRAUSS



"Among democratic nations each generation is a new people."—Alexis de Tocqueville

TWO WORLD VIEWS, REFLECTING FUNDAMENTALLY different visions of society and self, are moving into conflict in the America of the 1990s. A new generation gap is emerging. In the late 1960s the fight was mainly between twenty-year-olds and the fifty-plus crowd. Today it's mainly between young people and the thirty- to forty-year-olds.

In these gaps, the old 1960s one and the emerging 1990s facsimile, there have been two constants: Each time, the same conspicuous generation has been involved. Each time, that generation has claimed the moral

and cultural high ground, casting itself as the apex of civilization and its age-bracket adversaries as soul-dead, progress-blocking philistines. The first time around, the members of that generation attacked their elders; now they're targeting their juniors.

We're talking about Baby Boomers. Born from 1943 to 1960, today's 69 million Boomers range in age from thirty-two to forty-nine. Defined by its personality type, this generation is somewhat different from the group defined simply by the well-known demographic fertility bulge (1946–1964). At the front end, the grown-up "victory ba-

bies" of 1943—peers of Janis Joplin and Bobby Fischer, Joni Mitchell and Geraldo Rivera, Oliver North and Rap Brown, R. Crumb and Angela Davis, Newt Gingrich and Bill Bradley—include the first Dr. Spock toddlers; the fiery college class of 1965; the oldest Vietnam-era draft-card burners; the eldest among "Americans Under 25," whom *Time* magazine named its "1967 Man of the Year"; and the last twenty-nine-year-olds (in 1972) to hear the phrase "under-thirty generation" before its sudden disappearance. At the back end, the grown-up Eisenhower babies of 1960 are the last-born of today's Americans to feel any affinity with the hippie-cum-yuppie baggage that accompanies the Boomer label.

The younger antagonists are less well known: America's thirteenth generation, born from 1961 to 1981, ranging in age from eleven to thirty-one. Demographers call them Baby Busters, a name that deserves a prompt and final burial. First, it's incorrect: The early-sixties birth cohorts are among the biggest in U.S. history—and, at 80 million, this generation has numerically outgrown the Boom. By the late 1990s it will even outvote the Boom. Second, the name is insulting—"Boom" followed by "Bust," as though wonder were followed by disappointment. The novelist Doug Coupland, himself a 1961 baby, dubs his age-mates "Generation X" or "Xers," a name first used by and about British Boomer-punkers. Shann Nix, a journalist at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, suggests "posties" (as in "post-yuppies"), another name that, like Coupland's, leaves the generation in the shadow of the great Boom.

We give these young people a nonlabel label that has nothing to do with Boomers. If we count back to the peers of Benjamin Franklin, "Thirteeners" are, in point of fact, the thirteenth generation to know the U.S. flag and the Constitution. More than a name, the number thirteen is a gauntlet, an obstacle to be overcome. Maybe it's the floor where elevators don't stop, or the doughnut that bakers don't count. Then again, maybe it's a suit's thirteenth card—the ace—that wins, face-down, in a game of high-stakes blackjack. It's an understated number for an underestimated generation.

The old generation gap of the late 1960s and early 1970s featured an incendiary war between college kids and the reigning leaders of great public institutions. Back then the moralizing aggressors were on the younger side. And back then Americans in their thirties and early forties (the "Silent Generation," born from 1925 to 1942) stood in between as mentors and mediators.

The new generation gap of the 1990s is different. It features a smoldering mutual disdain between Americans now reaching midlife and those born just after them. This time the moralizing aggressors are on the older side. And this time no generation stands in between.

What separates the collective personalities of Boomers and Thirteeners? First, look at today's mainline media, a hotbed of forty-year-old thinking. Notice how, in Boomers' hands, 1990s America is becoming a somber land obsessed with values, back-to-basics movements, ethical rectitude, political correctness, harsh punishments, and a yearning for the simple life. Life's smallest

acts exalt (or diminish) one's personal virtue. A generation weaned on great expectations and gifted in deciphering principle is now determined to reinfuse the entire society with meaning.

Now look again—and notice a countermood popping up in college towns, in big cities, on Fox and cable TV, and in various ethnic side currents. It's a tone of physical frenzy and spiritual numbness, a revelry of pop, a pursuit of high-tech, guiltless fun. It's a carnival culture featuring the tangible bottom lines of life—money, bodies, and brains—and the wordless deals with which one can be traded for another. A generation weaned on minimal expectations and gifted in the game of life is now avoiding meaning in a cumbersome society that, as they see it, offers them little.

For evidence of this emerging generation gap, take a look at a *Fortune* magazine survey earlier this year asking employed twentysomethings if they would ever "like to be like" Baby Boomers. Four out of five say no. Peruse recent surveys asking college students what they think of various Boomer-sanctioned moral crusades—everything from "family values" to the "New Age movement." By overwhelming margins, they either disapprove or are remarkably indifferent. Recall the furious Thirteeners' responses that appeared just after the media's celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Woodstock, or after the recent turn away from yuppie-style consumption ("Let the self-satisfied, self-appointed, self-righteous baby-boomers be the first to practice the new austerity they have been preaching of late," Mark Featherman announced in a *New York Times* essay titled "The 80's Party Is Over"). Notice the pointed anti-Boom references in such Thirteeners' films as *Running on Empty*, *Pump Up the Volume*, *Heathers*, *True Colors*, and *Little Man Tate*, or in the generation-defining prose of such emerging young

The generation gap of the 1990s is different from the one of the 1960s. It features a smoldering disdain between Americans now reaching midlife and those born just after them. This time, the moralizing aggressors are on the older side.

writers as Coupland, Nix, Brett Easton Ellis, Nancy Smith, Steven Gibb, Eric Liu, Gael Fashingbauer, David Bernstein, Robert Lukefahr, and Ian Williams.

Already Thirteeners blame Boomers for much that has gone wrong in their world, a tendency that is sure to grow once Boomers move fully into positions of political leadership. Remember, these are the young people who cast their first votes during the 1980s, for the party (Republican) and the generation (of Reagan and Bush) that Boomers at like age loved to excoriate. More recently the end of the Cold War and the "Bush recession" have persuaded Thirteeners to go along with an all-Boomer Democratic ticket. But fortysomething politicians can hardly rest easy. This latest turn in what Coupland calls the "microallegiances" of today's young people also reflects a toxic reaction to what Boomers have done to the other party (even right-wing Thirteeners shuddered to hear the Quayle and Quayle "values" preaching) and a vehement backlash against the status quo (pre-election opinion polls showed Ross Perot's strongest support coming from under-thirty voters). Whatever economic and cultural alienation Thirteeners feel over the next decade—and they will feel plenty—will inevitably get translated into hostility toward the new generation in power.

If being a resented older generation is a novel experience for Boomers, and if life on the short end feels ruinous to Thirteeners, each group can take a measure of solace in the repeating generational rhythms of American history. About every eighty or ninety years America has experienced this kind of generation gap between self-righteous neopuritans entering midlife and nomadic survivalists just coming of age.

Boomers

"SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON IN THE hearts of baby boomers," announced *American Demographics* magazine in a recent article heralding the 1990s. Around the same time, *Good Housekeeping* took a full-page in *The New York Times* to run an ad inspired by the Boomer marketing guru Faith Popcorn. The ad welcomed America to "the Decency Decade, the years when the good guys finally win. . . . It will be a very good decade for the Earth, as New Traditionalists lead an unstoppable environmental juggernaut that will change and inspire corporate America, and let us all live healthier, more decent lives," when consumers will "look for what is real, what is honest, what is quality, what is valued, what is important."

All across America, Americans in their thirties and forties are answering *Rolling Stone's* call to "muster the will to remake ourselves into altruists and ascetics." If, a decade earlier, twentysomething hippies evolved into thirtysomething yuppies, the new fortysomethings are now putting (according to the demographer Brad Ed-

mondson) "less emphasis on money and more on meaning." How can this be? How can a generation that came of age amid the libidinous euphoria of People's Park now be forming neighborhood associations to push "alcoholics, drug dealers, and wing nuts" out of Berkeley parks and out of their lives? How can a generation that a decade ago went, as Todd Gitlin put it, "from 'J'accuse' to Jacuzzi" now be leaving the Jacuzzi for a cold shower?

Over the past five decades, as Boomers have charted their life's voyage, they have consistently aged in a manner unlike what anyone, themselves included, ever expected. They began as the most indulged children of this century, basking in intensely child-focused households and communities. Benjamin Spock mixed science with friendliness and instructed parents to produce "idealistic children" through permissive feeding schedules. To most middle-class youths, poverty, disease, and crime were invisible—or, at worst, temporary nuisances that would soon succumb to the inexorable advance of affluence. With the outer world looking fine, the inner world became the point of youthful focus.

Their parents expected Boomers to be, in William Manchester's words, "adorable as babies, cute as grade school pupils and striking as they entered their teens," after which "their parents would be very, very proud of them." In 1965 *Time* magazine declared that teenagers were "on the fringe of a golden era"—and, two years later, described collegians as cheerful idealists who would "lay out blight-proof, smog-free cities, enrich the underdeveloped world, and, no doubt, write finis to poverty and war."

Hardly. Over the next several years Boomers discovered that they were never meant to be doers and builders like their parents. Instead, finding their parents' constructions in need of a major spiritual overhaul, even creative destruction, they triggered a youth-focused "Consciousness Revolution." Along the way, they became what Annie Gottlieb has described as "a tribe with its roots in a time, rather than place or race." That time was the late sixties, when the term "generation gap" gained currency.

The term was coined (and used most frequently) by the hard-charging dads of the "GI Generation," born from 1901 to 1924, a cohort reaching from Walt Disney to George Bush, whose 25 million surviving members today range in age from sixty-eight to ninety-one. Back in the heady days of what the historian William O'Neill has dubbed "the American High," the GI peers of John F. Kennedy made much of "gaps"—missile gaps, science gaps, poverty gaps. Gaps were something they thought themselves quite good at building bridges across. But not this one. Beginning in the late 1960s the generation gap became a full-fledged age war.

The youthful Boom ethos was deliberately antithetical to everything GI: spiritualism over science, gratification over patience, pessimism over optimism, fractiousness

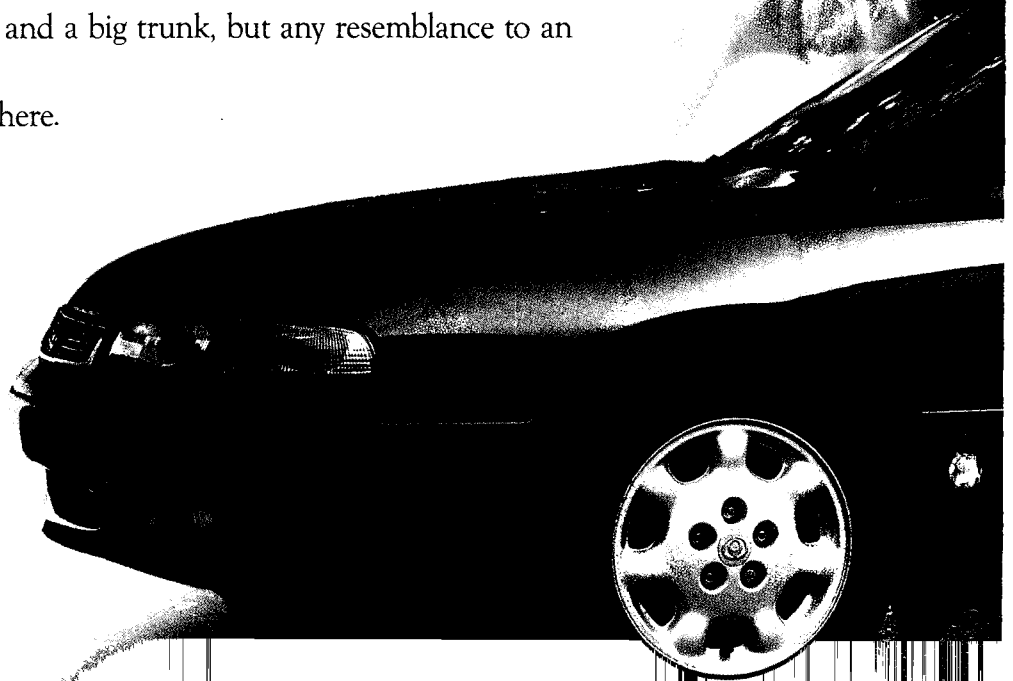
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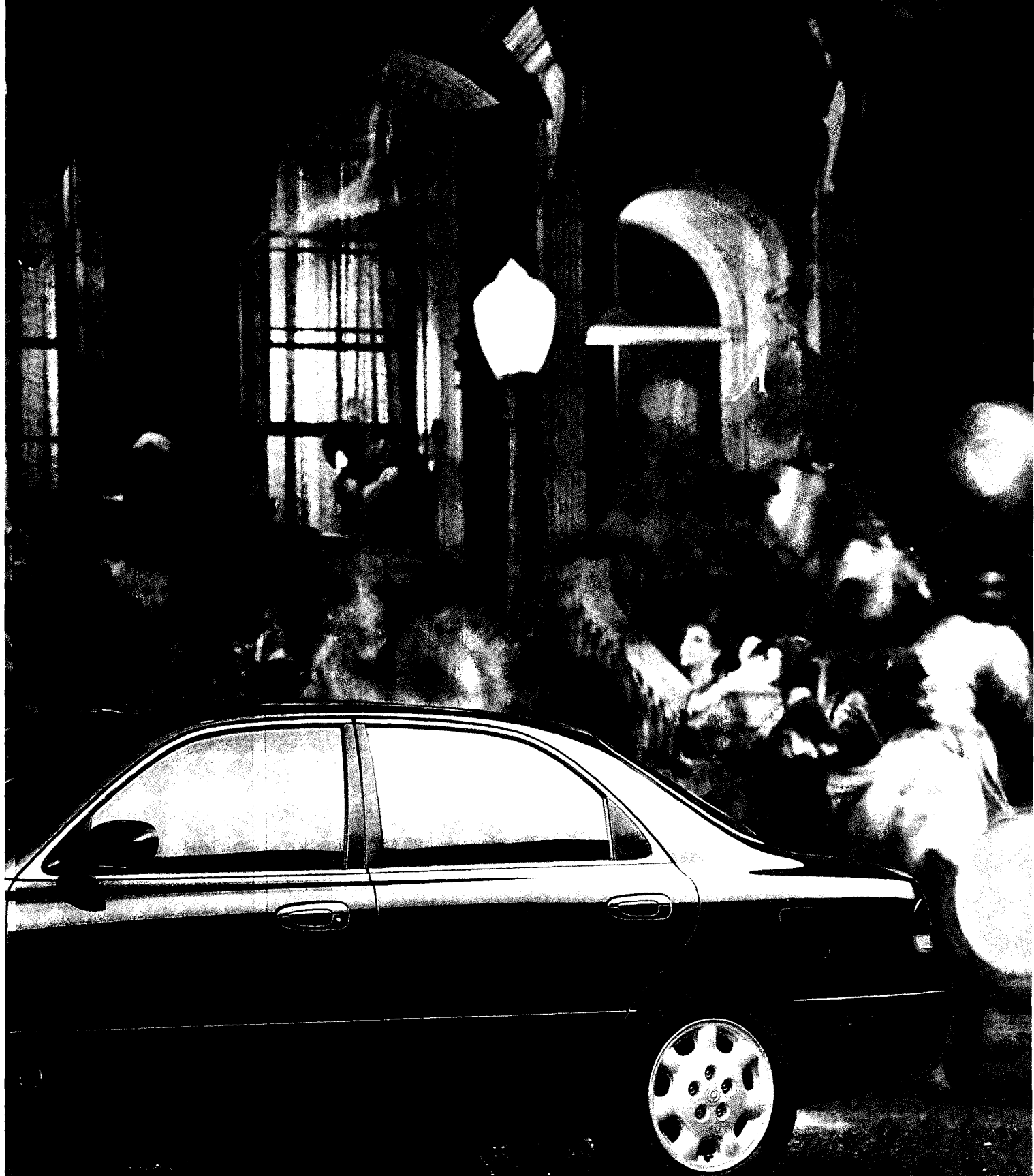
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over conformity, rage over friendliness, self over community. "STRIKE!" became the summons, the clenched fist the emblem, T-shirts and jeans the uniform, and "corporate liberalism" the enemy. Screaming radicals and freaked-out hippies represented just 10 to 15 percent of America's circa-1970 youth, but they set the tone. Off campus and at the other end of the political spectrum, a similar depth of anti-establishment rage welled up among blue-collar Boomers (who were twice as likely as their elders to vote for George Wallace in the 1968 election).

The GI-Boomer age war paralleled the Vietnam shooting war. It crested in 1969, along with draft calls and casualties. A couple of years later—after Ohio's National Guardsmen killed four Kent State students, after student opinion turned solidly against the war, and after Congress amended the Constitution to allow eighteen-year-olds to vote—Boomers began heeding the Beatles' simple "words of wisdom: let it be." The generation gap began to ease, in its outward forms at least, replaced by a grinding pessimism and a gray Boomer drizzle of sex, drugs, unemployment, and a sour (if less confrontational) mood on campus. In politics the Boomers settled in as more apathetic and more just plain illiberal than their rebelled-against parents could ever have imagined.

In the 1970s the GI-versus-Boom clash had a quiet denouement that has proved over time to be at least as consequential as the Boomers' angry demonstrations. No pact was signed, no speeches were made, but something of a deal was struck. On the one hand, Boomers said nothing as GIs then on the brink of retirement proceeded to channel a growing portion of the nation's public resources (over a period from the post-Vietnam peace dividend to the post-Cold War peace dividend) toward their own "entitlements." On the other hand, GIs did not object as Boomers asserted control of the culture. GI leaders (Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush) continued to preside at the pinnacle of government, while their retirement-bound peers became America's first old people to call themselves "senior citizens." Millions of men and women who had come of age with the New Deal abandoned America's increasingly Boom-oriented work life, separated into their own Sun City peer societies, tuned in to their own "Music of Your Life" radio stations, and began strengthening the clout of what was already the most powerful generational voting bloc in the history of global democracy. No generation in U.S. history—not even that of Jefferson and Madison—can match the GIs' lifetime record of success at getting, holding, and using political power.

At the same time, Boomers—who in the first days of the eighteen-year-old vote were expected to be a political powerhouse, sweeping candidates of their choice into the White House—played the role of political siren, first tempting candidates, then luring them to their demise. It was not until 1992, two decades after George McGovern

first begged for their votes, that Boomers finally showed more political clout than the aging GI peers of LBJ and Richard Nixon (and leapfrogged the leaderless Silent Generation, which may become the first generation in American history never to produce a President).

Along the way, the word "yuppie"—a term of derision among others, of self-mocking humor among Boomers—labeled a generation of supposedly sold-out ex-hippies. Introduced in 1981, the word referred to "young upwardly mobile professionals," a group that included only about one out of every twenty Boomers. But a much larger proportion fit the subjective definition: self-immersed, impatient for personal satisfaction, weak in civic instincts. Everything the yuppie did—what he ate, drank, listened to, lived in, and invested for—sent a negative message about GI-style culture and institutions.

Notwithstanding their affluent reputation through the 1980s, Boomers, especially those born in the middle to late 1950s, have not prospered. True, they are roughly keeping pace with the (Silent) generation just before them, at each phase of life. But were it not for the rising economic power of women (and the two-income household), they would be falling behind. Debt is a big problem: *U.S. News & World Report* says that roughly one fourth of all professional and managerial Boomers are "nebbies" (negative-equity Boomers) teetering on the edge of personal bankruptcy. Yet amid these financial problems, polls show, Boomers overwhelmingly consider their careers better, their personal freedoms greater, and their lives more meaningful than those of their parents. They know they may not be America's wealthiest generation, but the American Dream lives on for them in the form of a finely tuned inner life—which is one reason why aging GIs feel so little guilt about their economic condition.

Although 1990s-edition Boomers are no throwback to the 1960s, they see themselves as they did then (and always have): as the embodiment of moral wisdom. Their aging is taking on a nonapologetic quality—prompting *The New York Times* to relabel them "grumpies" (for "grown-up mature professionals"). The idea of telling other people what to do suits them just fine. They do not inherently dislike government; they simply want to redirect public institutions toward what they consider a socially redemptive purpose. Addressing America's unresolved social issues, from crime and homelessness to health and education, Boomers are far more inclined than other generations to believe, with Jeffrey Bell, that "the setting of society's standards is, in the final analysis, what politics is all about"—and to share Karl Zinsmeister's view that "genuine compassion demands that we forgo the comfortable, and ever so easier, responses of softness."

Whatever the problem, the Boomers' solution could not be more different from that of their parents at a like age. Their call is not for the white-coated scientist but for



THE BOMBAY SAPHIRE MARTINI. AS ENVISIONED BY MICHAEL GRAVES.

POUR SOMETHING PRICELESS.

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the black-cloaked preacher. Their prescription is not a sugar-coated elixir but a purgative tonic. Recent exit polls show that the politicians who disproportionately ride Boomer votes are either reverends (Pat Robertson and Jesse Jackson, who in the 1988 primaries did better among Boomers than among others) or bearers of dark messages (Jerry Brown, Paul Tsongas, and Pat Buchanan, who did best among Boomers in the 1992 primaries).

To solve social problems Boomers don't look to technology and big institutions (as did the GI peers of JFK and Nixon) or to expertise and committees (as have the Silent peers of Michael Dukakis and James Baker). Rather, Boomers look to values—the redemptive if painful resurrection of what Michael Lerner, the editor of the progressive magazine *Tikkun*, calls a "Politics of Meaning." Material abundance is not necessarily connected with such values, which is why even a severe recession could not dissuade the younger orators at the 1992 political conventions from talking less about GNP and housing starts than about moral standards and the state of America's soul (much to the bewilderment of over-fifty columnists—and to the jeers of the under-thirty viewers of MTV's *Like We Care*).

In one jurisdiction after another, Boomers who once voted for Reaganomics are now engaging in what David Blankenhorn, of the Institute for American Values, calls "a debate about causes and cures," a debate about "what we are prepared to give up." They are pushing for the explicit exercise of public authority—more taxes, zoning, schools, prisons—as long as this authority moves America toward the lofty social standard that Boomers themselves have sanctified. Boomers are stirring to defend values (monogamy, thrift, abstention from drugs) that other generations do not associate with them. The leaders among Boomer blacks, once known for the Afro cut and the black-power salute, are bypassing the rusty machinery of civil-rights legislation pioneered by their elders and are preaching a strict new standard of group pride, family integrity, and community loyalty.

A generation that came of age in an era of "Is God Dead?" is immersing itself in spiritual movements of all kinds, from evangelical fundamentalism to New Age humanism, from transcendentalism to ESP. By a substantial margin, Boomers are America's most God-absorbed living generation. Six out of ten report having experienced an extrasensory presence or power, versus only four out of ten among older generations. Six times as many Boomers plan to spend more time in religious activities in future years as plan to spend less.

Values-gripped Boomers are enlisting on one side or the other of what the family-policy guru Gary Bauer has called America's "cultural civil war." Candice Bergen, Garry Trudeau, Hillary Clinton, Paul Wellstone, communarians, pro-choicers, over here. Dan Quayle, Rush Limbaugh, "Decency Czar" Anne-Imelda Radice, Oliver North, evangelicals, pro-lifers, over there. Some Boomers

are joining eco-crusades, while others who don't mind "playing God" with endangered species have opted for the Wise Use Movement. The hot new fads are "values marketing" and "non-ism"—the art of advertising, and enjoying, whatever it is you're *not* consuming.

On both sides of the political spectrum Boomer politicians advocate stark, no-pain, no-gain "cures"—like the Oregon Plan for Medicaid triage, or Dan Quayle's demand that limits be placed on jury awards for "pain and suffering," or Al Gore's call for stiff energy taxes, or Massachusetts Governor William Weld's notion that a ten-year prison sentence should mean 10.0 years behind bars, or Bill Clinton's proposal that "we ought to have boot camp for first-time nonviolent offenders." Boomer editorialists adamantly reject dickering with foreign tyrants, compromise on the deficit, mercy for S&L violators, welfare for anybody who doesn't work for it.

Critics can and do call Boomers smug, narcissistic, self-righteous, intolerant, puritanical. But one commonly heard charge, that of hypocrisy, ill fits a generation that came of age resacralizing America and has kept at it. Always the distracted perfectionists, they apply first a light hand, then (once they start paying attention) a crushingly heavy one. They graze on munchies until they figure it's time to diet, and then they cover themselves with ashes and sackcloth. From Jonathan Schell to Jeremy Rifkin, Charles Murray to Shelby Steele, Steven Jobs to Steven Spielberg, Bill Bennett to Al Gore, Boomers are still doing what they have done for decades: giving America its leading visionaries and wise men—or, depending on your point of view, its preachy didacts.

It is in the shadow of such a generation that Thirteeners are having to come of age.

Thirteeners

AS THEY SHIELD THEIR EYES WITH RAY-BAN WAYFARER sunglasses, and their ears with Model TCD-D3 Sony Walkmen, today's teens and twenty-somethings present to Boomer eyes a splintered image of brassy looks and smooth manner, of kids growing up too tough to be cute, of kids more comfortable shopping or playing than working or studying. Ads target them as beasts of pleasure and pain who have trouble understanding words longer than one syllable, sentences longer than three words. Pop music on their Top 40 stations—heavy metal, alternative rock, rap—strikes many a Boomer ear as a rock-and-roll end game of harsh sounds, goin'-nowhere melodies, and clumsy poetry. News clips document a young-adult wasteland of academic nonperformance, political apathy, suicide pacts, date-rape trials, wilding, and hate crimes.

Who are they, and what are they up to? On the job, Thirteeners are the reckless bicycle messengers, pizza drivers, yard workers, Wal-Mart shelf-stockers, health-care trainees, and miscellaneous scavengers, hustlers, and

McJobbers in the low-wage/low-benefit service economy. They're the wandering nomads of the temp world, directionless slackers, habitual nonvoters. In school they're a group of staggering diversity—not just in ethnicity but also in attitude, performance, and rewards. After graduation they're the ones with big loans who were supposed to graduate into jobs and move out of the house but didn't, and who seem to get poorer the longer they've been away from home—unlike their parents at that age, who seemed to get richer.

In inner cities Thirteeners are the unmarried teen mothers and unconcerned teen fathers, the Crips and Bloods, the innocent hip-hoppers grown weary of watching white Boomers cross the street to avoid them. In suburbs they're the kids at the mall, kids buying family groceries for busy moms and dads, kids in mutual-protection circles of friends, girding against an adolescent world far more dangerous than anything their parents knew, kids struggling to unlink sex from disease and death.

In them lies much of the doubt, distress, and endangered dream of late-twentieth-century America. As a group they aren't what older people ever wanted but rather what they themselves know they need to be: pragmatic, quick, sharp-eyed, able to step outside themselves and understand how the world really works. From the Thirteeners' vantage point, America's greatest need these days is to clear out the underbrush of name-calling and ideology so that simple things can work again. Others don't yet see it, but today's young people are beginning to realize that their upbringing has endowed them with a street sense and pragmatism their elders lack. Many admit they *are* a bad generation—but so, too, do they suspect that they are a *necessary* generation for a society in dire need of survival lessons.

When they look into the future, they see a much bleaker vision than any of today's older generations ever saw in their own youth. Polls show that Thirteeners believe it will be much harder for them to get ahead than it was for their parents—and that they are overwhelmingly pessimistic about the long-term fate of their generation and nation. They sense that they're the clean-up crew, that their role in history will be sacrificial—that whatever comeuppance America has to face, they'll bear more than their share of the burden. It's a new twist, and not a happy one, on the American Dream.

Trace the life cycle to date of Americans born in 1961. They were among the first babies people took pills not to

have. During the 1967 Summer of Love they were the kindergartners who paid the price for America's new divorce epidemic. In 1970 they were fourth-graders trying to learn arithmetic amid the chaos of open classrooms and New Math curricula. In 1973 they were the bell-bottomed sixth-graders who got their first real-life civics lesson watching the Watergate hearings on TV. Through the late 1970s they were the teenage mall-hoppers who spawned the Valley Girls and other flagrantly non-Boomer youth trends. In 1979 they were the graduating seniors of Carter-era malaise who registered record-low SAT scores and record-high crime and drug-abuse rates.

In 1980 they cast their first votes, mostly for Reagan, became the high-quality nineteen-year-old enlistees who began surging into the military, and arrived on campus as the smooth, get-it-done freshmen who evidenced a sudden turnaround from the intellectual arrogance and social immaturity of Boomer students. They were the college class of 1983, whose graduation coincided with the ballyhooed *A Nation at Risk* report, which warned that education was beset by "a rising tide of mediocrity." In 1985 they were the MBA grads who launched the meteoric rise in job applications to Wall Street. And in 1991 they hit age thirty just when turning "thirtysomething" (a big deal for yuppies in the 1980s) became a tired subject—and when the pretentious TV serial with that title was yanked off the air.

Like any generation, Thirteeners grew up with parents who are distributed in roughly equal measure between the two prior generations (Silent and Boom). But also like any generation, they were decisively influenced by the senior parental cohort. Much as GIs shaped the *Sputnik* 1950s for Boomers, the Silent Generation provided the media producers, community leaders, in-

fluent educators, and rising politicians during the Rated 70s, the decade that most Thirteeners still regard as their childhood home.

And what did Thirteeners absorb from that generation and that era? Mostly they learned to be cynical about adults whom they perceived to be sensitive yet powerless, better at talking about issues than solving problems. For the Silent Generation, then hitting midlife, the cultural upheaval of the 1970s meant liberation from youthful conformism, a now-or-never passage away from marriages made too young and careers chosen too early. But for Thirteeners just growing up, the 1970s meant something very different: an adult world that expressed moral

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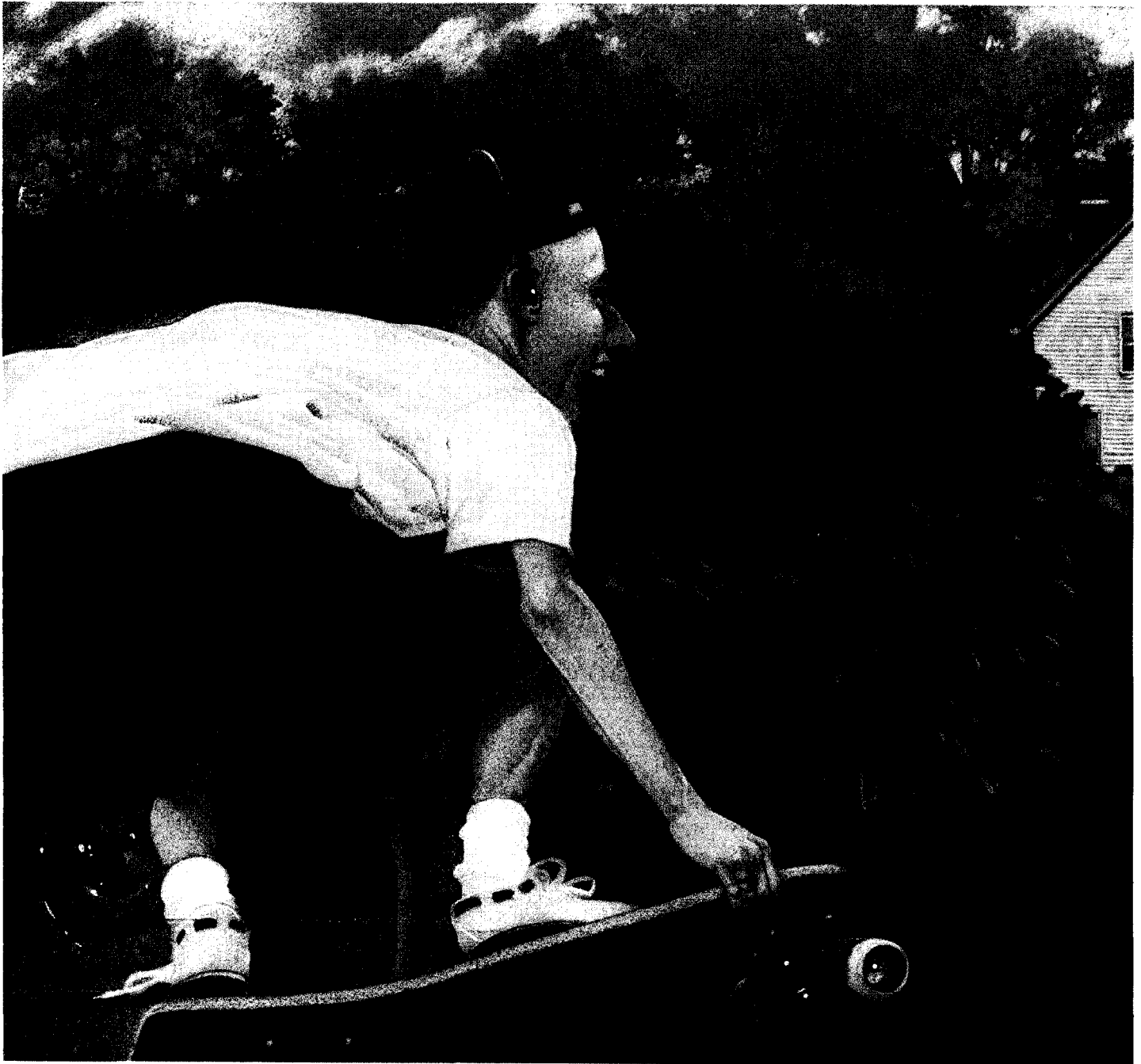


ambivalence where children sought clear answers, that expected children to cope with real-world problems, that hesitated to impose structure on children's behavior, and that demonstrated an amazing (even stupefying) tolerance for the rising torrent of pathology and negativism that engulfed children's daily life.

When they were small, the nation was riding high. When they reached adolescence, national confidence weakened, and community and family life splintered. Older people focused less on the future, planned less for it, and invested less in it. A Consciousness Revolution that seemed euphoric to young adults was to Thirteeners the beginning of a ride on a down escalator. The public

debacles of their youth fostered the view that adults were not especially virtuous or competent—that kids couldn't count on adults to protect them from danger.

From Boom to Thirteenth, America's children went from a family culture of *My Three Sons* to one of *My Two Dads*. As millions of mothers flocked into the work force, the proportion of preschoolers cared for in their own homes fell by half. For the first time, adults ranked automobiles ahead of children as necessary for "the good life." The cost of raising a child, never very worrisome when Boomers were little, suddenly became a fraught issue. Adults of fertile age doubled their rate of surgical sterilization. The legal-abortion rate grew to the point



where one out of every three pregnancies was terminated. Back in 1962 half of all adults agreed that parents in bad marriages should stay together for the sake of the children. By 1980 less than a fifth agreed. America's divorce rate doubled from 1965 to 1975, just as first-born Thirteeners passed through middle childhood.

The pop culture conveyed to little kids and (by 1980) teenagers a recurring message from the adult world: that they weren't wanted, and weren't even liked, by the grown-ups around them. Polls and social statistics showed a sharp shift in public attitudes toward (and treatment of) children. Taxpayers revolted against school funding, and landlords and neighborhoods that had once smiled on

young Boomers started banning children. The Zero Population Growth movement declared the creation of each additional infant to be a bad thing, and the moviegoing public showed an unquenchable thirst for a new cinematic genre: the devil-child horror film. The same year Boomers were blissing out at Woodstock, the baby that riveted America's attention had a mother named Rosemary (*Please* don't have this baby, millions of viewers whispered to themselves).

From the late 1960s until the early 1980s America's pre-adolescents grasped what nurture they could through the most virulently anti-child period in modern American history. Ugly new phrases ("latchkey child," "throwaway

child,” and later “boomerang child”) joined the sad new lexicon of youth. America’s priorities lay elsewhere, as millions of kids sank into poverty, schools deteriorated, and a congeries of elected politicians set a new and distinctly child-hostile course of national overconsumption. Then, when Thirteeners were ready to enter the adult labor force, the politicians pushed every policy lever conceivable—tax codes, entitlements, public debt, unfunded liabilities, labor laws, hiring practices—to tilt the economic playing field away from the young and toward the old. The results were predictable.

Since the early 1970s the overall stagnation in American economic progress has masked some vastly unequal changes in living standards by phase of life. Older people have prospered, Boomers have barely held their own, and Thirteeners have fallen off a cliff. The columnist Robert Kuttner describes Thirteeners as victims of a “remarkable generational economic distress. . . a depression of the young,” which makes them feel “uniquely thirsty in a sea of affluence.” Ever since the first Thirteeners reached their teens, the inflation-adjusted income of all adult men under age thirty-five has sunk—dropping by more than 20 percent since as recently as 1979. Twenty years ago a typical thirty-year-old male made six percent more than a typical sixty-year-old male; today he makes 14 percent less. The same widening age gap can be observed in poverty rates, public benefits, home ownership, union membership, health insurance, and pension participation. Along the way, this is becoming a generation of betrayed expectations. Polls show that most teenagers (of both sexes) expect to be earning \$30,000 or more by age thirty, but in 1990 the U.S. Census Bureau reported that among Americans aged twenty-five to twenty-nine there were eight with total annual incomes of under \$30,000 for every one making more than \$30,000.

Welcome, Thirteeners, to contemporary American life: While older age brackets are getting richer, yours is getting poorer. Where earlier twentieth-century generations could comfortably look forward to outpacing Mom and Dad, you probably won’t even be able to keep up. If, when you leave home, you have a high school degree or better, there’s a 40 percent chance you’ll “boomerang” back to live with your parents at least once. (Today more young adults are living with their parents than at any other time since the Great Depression.) When you marry, you and your spouse will both work—not for Boomerish self-fulfillment but because you need to just to make ends meet. If you want children, you’ll have to defy statistics showing that since 1973 the median real income has fallen by 30 percent for families with children which are headed by persons under thirty. And you’d better not slip up. Over the past twenty years the poverty rate among under-thirty families has more than doubled. Your generation, in fact, has a weaker middle class than any other generation born in this century—which means that the distance is widening between those of you who are

beating the average and those who are sinking beneath it.

Everywhere they look, Thirteeners see the workplace system rigged against them. As they view it, the families, schools, and training programs that could have prepared them for worthwhile careers have been allowed to rot, but the institutions that safeguard the occupational livelihood of mature workers have been maintained with full vigor. Trade quotas protect decaying industries. Immigration quotas protect dinosaur unions. Two-tier wage scales discriminate against young workers. Federal labor regulations protect outmoded skills. State credential laws protect overpriced professions. Huge FICA taxes take away Thirteeners’ money that, polls show, most Thirteeners expect never to see again. And every year another incomprehensible twelve-digit number gets added to the national debt, which Thirteeners know will someday get dumped on them. Whatever may happen to the meek, they know it’s not their generation that’s about to inherit the earth.

Like warriors on the eve of battle, Thirteeners face their future with a mixture of bravado and fatalism. Squared off competitively against one another, this mélange of scared city kids, suburban slackers, hungry immigrants, desperate grads, and shameless hustlers is collectively coming to realize that America rewards only a select set of winners with its Dream—and that America cares little about its anonymous losers. Sizing up the odds, each Thirteeners finds himself or herself essentially alone, to an extent that most elders would have difficulty comprehending. Between his own relative poverty and the affluence he desires, the Thirteeners sees no intermediary signposts, no sure, step-by-step path along which society will help him, urge him, congratulate him. Instead, all he sees is an enormous obstacle, with him on one side and everything he wants on the other.

And what’s that obstacle? Those damn Boomers.

The New Generation Gap

A QUARTER CENTURY AGO KIDS CALLED OLDER PEOPLE names. These days, the reverse is true. For the past decade Thirteeners have been bombarded with study after story after column about how dumb, greedy, and just plain bad they supposedly are. They can’t find Chicago on a map. They don’t know when the Civil War was fought. They watch too much TV, spend too much time shopping, seldom vote (and vote for shallow reasons when they do), cheat on tests, don’t read newspapers, and care way too much about cars, clothes, shoes, and money. Twenty years ago Boomers cautioned one another not to trust anyone over thirty; now the quip is “Don’t ask anyone *under* thirty.” “How can kids today be so dumb?” Tony Kornheiser, of *The Washington Post*, recently wondered. “They can’t even make change unless the cash register tells them exactly how much to remit. Have you seen their faces when your

cheeseburger and fries comes to \$1.73, and you give them \$2.03? They freeze, thunderstruck. They have absolutely no comprehension of what to do next."

Amidst this barrage, Thirteeners have become (in elders' eyes) a symbol of an America in decline. Back in the 1970s social scientists looked at the American experience over the preceding half century and observed that each new generation, compared with the last, traveled another step upward on the Maslovian scale of human purpose, away from concrete needs and toward higher, more spiritual aspirations. Those due to arrive after the Boomers, they expected, would be even more cerebral, more learned, more idealistic, than any who came before. No chance—especially once Boomers started to sit in judgment and churn out condemnatory reports on the fitness of their generational successor. To fathom this Boom-defined Thirteener, this creature of pleasure and pain—this "Last Man" of history, driven only by appetites and no longer by ideas or beliefs—you can wade through Francis Fukuyama's commentary on Nietzsche. Or you can just imagine a TV-glued Thirteener audience nodding in response to Jay Leno's line about why teenagers eat Doritos: "Hey, kids! We're not talkin' brain cells here. We're talkin' taste buds."

Over the past decade Boomers have begun acting on the assumption that Thirteeners are "lost"—reachable by pleasure-pain conditioning perhaps, but closed to reason or sentiment. In the classroom Boomers instruct the young in "emotional literacy"; in the military they delouse the young with "core values" training; on campus they drill the young in the vocabulary of "political correctness." The object is not to get them to understand—that would be asking too much—but to get them to behave. Back in the era of Boomers' youth, when young people did things that displeased older people—when they drank beer, drove fast, didn't study, had sex, took drugs—the nation had an intergenerational dialogue, which, if nasty, at least led to a fairly articulate discourse about values and social philosophy. Today the tone has shifted to monosyllables ("Just say no"). The lexicon has been stripped of sentiment ("workfare" and "wedfare" in place of "welfare"). And the method has shifted to brute survival tools: prophylaxis or punishment.

This generation—more accurately, this generation's *reputation*—has become a Boomer metaphor for America's loss of purpose, disappointment with institutions, despair over the culture, and fear for the future. Many

Boomers are by now of the settled opinion that Thirteeners are—front to back—a disappointing bunch. This attitude is rooted partly in observation, partly in blurry nostalgia, partly in self-serving sermonizing, but the very fact that it is becoming a consensus is a major problem for today's young people. No one can blame them if they feel like a demographic black hole whose only elder-anointed mission is somehow to pass through the next three quarters of a century without causing too much damage to the nation during their time.

To date Thirteeners have seldom either rebutted their elders' accusations or pressed their own countercharges.

Polls show them mostly agreeing that, yes, Boomer kids probably were a better lot, listened to better music, pursued better causes, and generally had better times on campus. So, they figure, why fight a rap they can't beat? And besides, why waste time and energy arguing? Their usual strategy, in recent years at least, has been to keep their thoughts to themselves. On campus Thirteeners chat pleasantly in P.C. lingo with their "multiculti" prof or dean and then think nothing of spoofing the faculty behind their backs (they can't be totally serious, right?) or playfully relaxing with headphones to the racist lyrics of Ice Cube or Guns N' Roses. But among friends they talk frankly about how to maneuver in a world full of self-righteous ideologues.

Every phase and arena of life has been fine, even terrific, when Boomers entered it—and a wasteland when they left. A child's world was endlessly sunny in the 1950s, scarred by family chaos in the 1970s. Most movies and TV shows were fine for adolescents in the 1960s, unfit in the 1980s. Young-adult sex meant free love in the 1970s, AIDS in the 1990s. Boomers might prefer to think of their generation as the leaders of social progress, but the facts show otherwise.

Yes, the Boom *is* a generation of trends, *but all those trends are negative*. The eldest Boomers (those born in the middle 1940s) have had relatively low rates of social pathology and high rates of academic achievement. The youngest Boomers (born in the late 1950s) have had precisely the opposite: high pathology, low achievement.

Again and again America has gotten fed up with Boom-inspired transgressions. But after taking aim at the giant collective Boomer ego and winding up with a club to bash Boomers for all the damage they did, America has swung late, missed, and (*pow!*) hit the next bunch of saps to come walking by. Constantly stepping into post-Boom desertscapes and suffering because of it, Thirteeners see

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Boomers as a generation that was given everything—from a *Happy Days* present to a Tomorrowland future—and then threw it all away.

Many a Thirteenener would be delighted never to read another commemorative article about Woodstock, Kent State, or the Free Speech Movement. Or to suffer through what Coupland calls “legislated nostalgia”—the celebration of supposedly great events in the life cycle of people one doesn’t especially like. Thirteeneners fume when they hear Boomers taking credit for things they didn’t do (starting the civil-rights movement, inventing rock-and-roll, stopping the Vietnam War) and for supposedly having been the most creative, idealistic, morally conscious youth in the history of America, if not the world. Even among Thirteeneners who admire what young people did back in the sixties, workaholic, values-fixated Boomers are an object lesson in what not to become in their thirties and forties.

Put yourself in Thirteenener shoes. Watching those crusaders gray in place just ahead of you—ensconced in college faculties, public-radio stations, policy foundations, and trendy rural retreats—you notice how Boomers keep redefining every test of idealism in ways guaranteed to make you fail. You’re expected to muster passions against political authority you’ve never felt, to search for truth in places you’ve never found useful, to solve world problems through gestures you find absurd. As you gaze at the seamy underside of grand Boomer causes gone bust, you turn cynical. Maybe you stop caring. And the slightest lack of interest on your part is interpreted as proof of your moral blight. No matter that it was the crusaders’ own self-indulgence that let the system fall apart. The “decade of greed” is *your* fault. “Compassion fatigue” is *your* fault. The “age of apathy” has *your* monosyllabic graffiti splattered all over it.

What Thirteeneners want from Boomers is an apology mixed in with a little generational humility. Something like: “Hey, guys, we’re sorry we ruined everything for you. Maybe we’re not such a super-duper generation, and maybe we can learn something from you.” Good luck. A more modest Thirteenener hope is that Boomers will lighten up, look at their positive side, and find a little virtue in the “Just do it” motto written on their sneaker pumps.

Like two neighbors separated by a spite fence, Boomers and Thirteeneners have grown accustomed to an uneasy adjacence.

Another Tale of Two Generations

SOME TIME AGO THE FORTYISH WRITER CORNELIA A. P. Comer published a “Letter to the Rising Generation” in this magazine, accusing people in their twenties of “mental rickets and curvature of the soul,” of a “*culte du moi*,” of growing up “painfully commercialized even in their school days.” Blaming this on “a good many haphazard educational experiments”

that had “run amuck” and ignored “the education of the soul,” Comer asked, “What excuse have you, anyhow, for turning out flimsy, shallow, amusement-seeking creatures?” She went on, tossing insults like mortar shells:

The rising generation cannot spell . . . ; its English is slipshod and commonplace. . . . Veteran teachers are saying that never in their experience were young people so thirstily avid of pleasure as now . . . so selfish, and so hard! . . . Of your chosen pleasures, some are obviously corroding to the taste; to be frank, they are vulgarizing. . . . the bulk of the programme is almost inevitably drivel, common, stupid, or inane.

Responding to Comer, also in this magazine, the twenty-five-year-old Randolph Bourne defended his generation as a logical reaction to the “helplessness” of parents and other adults. “The modern child from the age of ten is almost his own ‘boss,’” he observed, adding that “the complexity of the world we face only makes more necessary our bracing up for the fray.” His defense went on:

We of the rising generation have to work this problem out all alone. . . . I doubt if any generation was ever thrown quite so completely on its own resources as ours is. . . . The rising generation has a very real feeling of coming straight up against a wall of diminishing opportunity. I do not see how it can be denied that practical opportunity is less for this generation than it has been for those preceding it.

Bourne did not waste the chance to express a growing twentysomething bitterness at the prim hypocrisy of people in their forties.

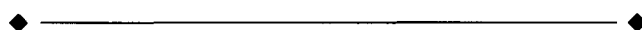
We have retained from childhood the propensity to see through things, and to tell the truth with startling frankness. . . . It is true that we do not fuss and fume about our souls, or tend our characters like a hot-house plant. . . . We cannot be blamed for acquiring a suspicion of ideals. . . . We are more than half confident that the elder generation does not itself really believe all the conventional ideals which it seeks to force upon us. . . . You have been trying so long to reform the world by making men “good,” and with such little success, that we may be pardoned if we turn our attention to the machinery of society, and give up for a time the attempt to make the operators of that machinery strictly moral. We are disgusted with sentimentality.

It sounds like a typical Boomer-versus-Thirteenener spat of the 1990s—like some argument you might imagine reading between William Bennett and Brett Easton Ellis. But the Comer-Bourne letters were published eight decades ago, in 1911.

Comer’s “Missionary Generation,” born from 1860 to 1882, had a life cycle that foreshadowed the Boomer experience. Comer’s peers were raised in the aftermath of national cataclysm (the Civil War), indulged as children, spectacular as students, furious with soul-dead fathers, absorbed with the “inner life,” unyielding as reformers,

and slow to form families—but, once they did, they were determined to protect their tots from the wildness of kids then in their teens and twenties. Likewise, Bourne's "Lost Generation," born from 1883 to 1900, began life in a most Thirteen-like way: born in a time of social and spiritual turmoil, neglected as children, disappointing as students, pushed very young into a cash economy of throwaway urchins, and constantly bossed around and criticized as a "bad kid" generation. Whatever age bracket the young Lost entered, they felt it had been somehow ruined by those who preceded them.

In 1911 the generational clash between Missionary and Lost was just getting started—that is, it was about where we see the relationship between Boomers and Thirteeners today. But within a decade the clash grew far more strident, became a major defining element of the national mood (putting much of the "roar" into the 1920s), and



TABLE

from the Turkish of Edip Cansever

A man filled with the gladness of living
Put his keys on the table,
Put flowers in a copper bowl there.
He put his eggs and milk on the table.
He put there the light that came in through the window,
Sound of a bicycle, sound of a spinning wheel.
The softness of bread and weather he put there.
On the table the man put
Things that happened in his mind.
What he wanted to do in life,
He put that there.
Those he loved, those he didn't love,
The man put them on the table too.
Three times three make nine:
The man put nine on the table.
He was next to the window next to the sky;
He reached out and placed on the table endlessness.
So many days he had wanted to drink a beer!
He put on the table the pouring of that beer.
He placed there his sleep and his wakefulness;
His hunger and his fullness he placed there.

Now that's what I call a table!
It didn't complain at all about the load.
It wobbled once or twice, then stood firm.
The man kept piling things on.

—Richard Tillinghast

triggered wide-ranging moralistic policy responses, from Prohibition to a sudden crackdown on immigration.

No one can say for sure where the Boomer-Thirteen generation gap is heading. But by looking closely at the experience of these antecedent generations, we have at least some basis for predicting what could happen in the decades ahead.

The Missionary Generation

LET'S START WITH MISSIONARIES—A GENERATION that today's GI seniors remember as the aging "wise men" who presided over the Second World War, as elders who possessed a social respect and cultural influence vastly exceeding what GIs themselves have at the same age. Yet the generation of Franklin Roosevelt, Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, Henry Stimson, Harold Ickes, and Bernard Baruch was far more recognizable as Boomerlike when young. They had enormous egos and an undying fixation on self-discovery, values, and moral confrontation. This was also the generation of Billy Sunday and William Jennings Bryan, of Margaret Sanger and Emma Goldman, of W.E.B. DuBois and Upton Sinclair, of angry muckrakers and violent Wobblies.

Missionaries grew up in a world of orderly families and accelerating prosperity, and among adults who were more enthusiastic about science and industry than about faith. Older generations felt themselves to be living in a rapidly modernizing era whose main shortcomings were ethical and could someday be remedied by the young. From the first modern image of a gift-toting Santa Claus to the first amusement parks, from lavishly funded public schools to new women's colleges, the world was, for Missionaries, a hothouse of adult attention. W.E.B. DuBois remembered his boyhood home town as a "child's paradise," Jane Addams how her girlfriends had been "sickened with advantages." Likening this Little Lord Fauntleroy style of child nurture to the Dr. Spock 1950s, the family historian Mary Cable has described this "long children's picnic" as "a controlled but pleasantly free atmosphere."

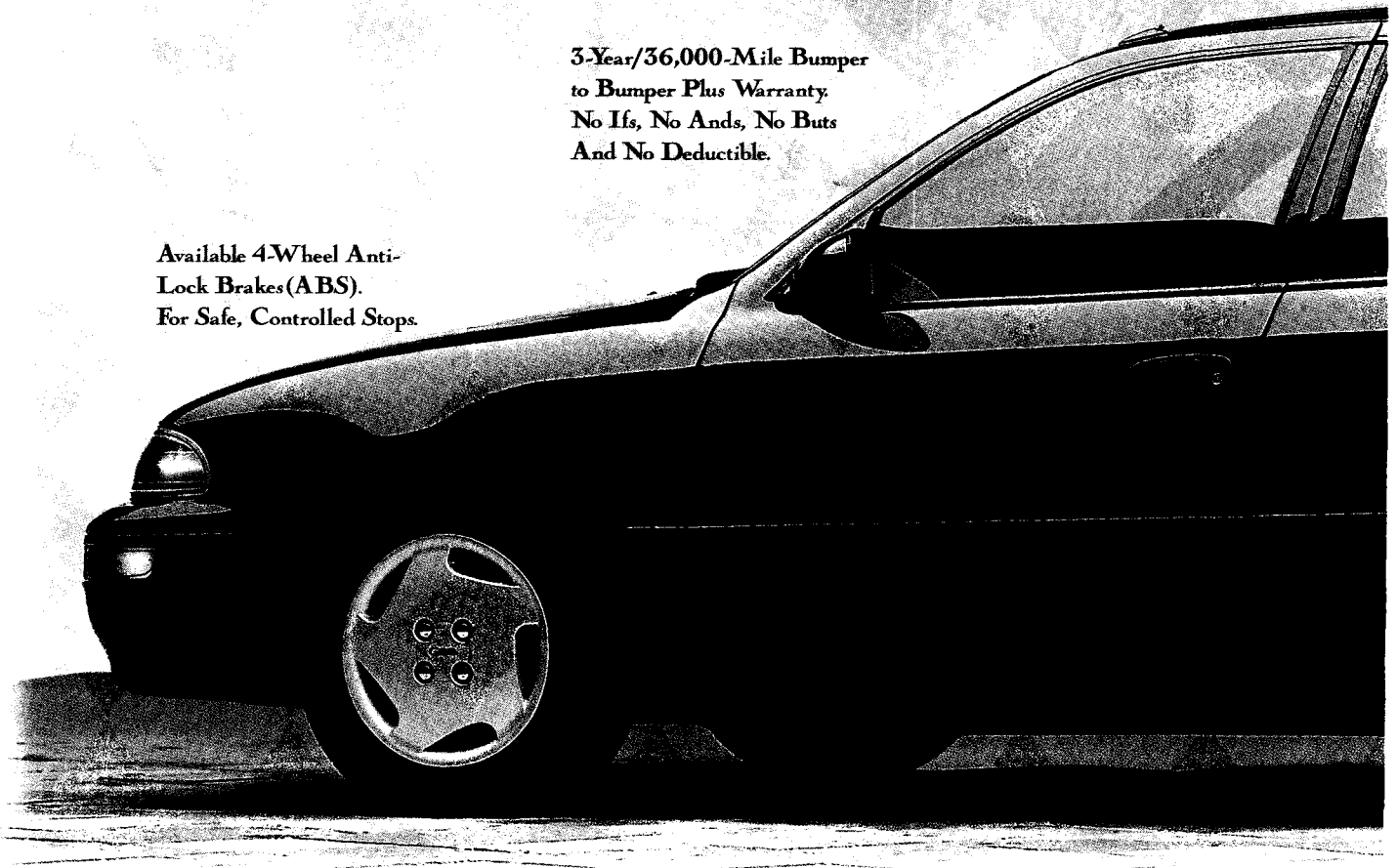
Thunder struck when these kids came of age. Armed with self-discovered principles, they rebelled against the very Santa Claus complacency and Horatio Alger materialism in which they had been raised. In the workplace they triggered anarchist violence and labor radicalism. In the countryside they enlisted in populist crusades. In the cities they indulged in food-faddism and raged against elder-built political machines, horrified by what George Cabot Lodge found to be "a world of machine-guns and machine-everything-else." On college campuses tens of thousands of affluent students joined Jane Addams's settlement-house crusade. "As for questions," Lincoln Steffens recalled, "the professors asked them, not the students; and the students, not the teachers, answered

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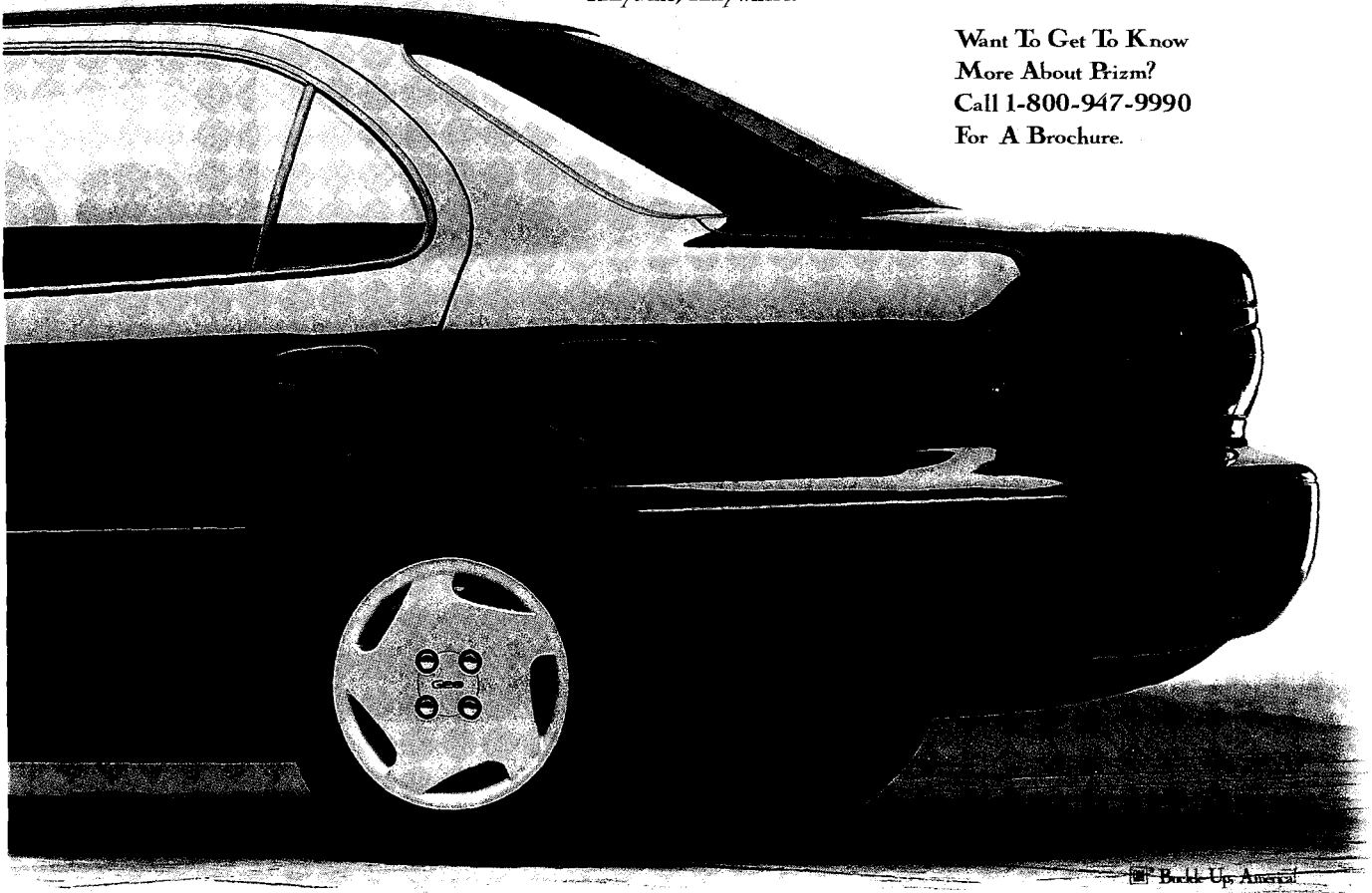
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them.” Overseas they spread the Gospel worldwide under the banner of the motto “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation.” They saw themselves as having reached an apex of human consciousness, a zenith of civilization. Maybe they were right—but their arrogance did not go unnoticed by people of other ages.

During Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency, as they entered what might be called their yuppie phase, Missionaries shrugged off a weakening economy and tried to get on with their personal lives and careers. Pioneering the invention of autos and airplanes, they joined technology to their individual inner aspirations. By that decade’s end the bombs and riots they had triggered in their twenties had become something of an embarrassment to forty-year-olds showing an increasingly prudish bent.

Having perfected their inner lives, Missionaries zealously began taking on the outer world. During and after the First World War they rose to positions of power over the very institutions they had attacked in their youth. They pushed a vacillating elder President into a “war to end all wars,” and then used their growing political clout to turn the brief emergency to moral purposes. The constitutional agendas of the dries and the feminists (both of which quickly triumphed) were just part of a generational crusade against a flood tide of decadence and injustice, which the Missionaries saw pouring into the cities, splintering society, and threatening the nation’s small children. While Senator Andrew Volstead led the legislative crackdown on alcohol, Senator Francis Harrison led the crackdown on drugs, and a Missionary-led Congress put a virtual halt to immigration. Federal movie censor William Harrison Hayes pushed a Code of Decency against torrid love scenes on camera; Ku Klux Klan leaders tried to “Americanize” the heartland; Henry Ford encouraged workers toward “thrift, honesty, sobriety, better housing, and better living generally”; and the nation’s first vice squads started hunting down younger bootleggers.

In *Confessions of a Reformer*, Frederic Howe explained that

early assumptions as to virtue and vice, goodness and evil remained in my mind long after I had tried to discard them. This is, I think, the most characteristic influence of my generation. It explains the nature of our reforms, the regulatory legislation in morals and economics, our belief in men rather than institutions and our messages to other people. Missionaries and battle-ships, anti-saloon leagues and Ku Klux Klans . . . are all a part of that evangelistic psychology . . . that seeks a moralistic explanation of social problems and a religious solution to most of them.

Only later on, entering old age, did Missionaries mature into the craggy personas best known to history—those whom H. L. Mencken called the “New Deal Isaiahs,” those white-haired champions of social regimentation amid economic collapse and a global war

against fascism. But that was just the last act in a series of crusades that commenced as soon as Missionaries reached midlife and were able to join their preachiness to political clout. And what was the first and most obvious target for their crusades? None other than the young Lost Generation at which Cornelia Comer had aimed her letter.

The Lost Generation

TODAY’S ELDEST THIRTEENERS HAVE ONLY THE dimmest personal memory of this Lost Generation, the ex-flappers and veteran doughboys whom they vaguely recall from childhood as the burned-out old codgers of the 1960s and 1970s. But when they see old movies and newsreels, they know the label fits: Kinetic Lost, as in Jimmy Cagney and Charlie Chaplin. Evil Lost, as in Boris Karloff and Edward G. Robinson. Adventuresome Lost, as in Humphrey Bogart and Douglas Fairbanks. Mischievous Lost, as in Mae West and the Marx Brothers. Tough Lost, as in “Give ‘Em Hell” Harry Truman and “Blood and Guts” George Patton. However you slice it, this was a generation short on preachers—but long on battle-scarred survivors.

The last time the word “lost” was attached to American youth was in the aftermath of the First World War; it certainly never was applied to Boomers—who, if anything, grew up a little too “found” for most people’s taste. But today the word is staging a comeback in descriptions of today’s youth. Does the parallel fit?

For a start, take a look at the social mood in which the Lost Generation grew up. Can we find any similarities between 1890–1910 and, say, 1965–1985? Turn-of-the-century America’s mood was euphoric for the coming-of-age Missionary prophets but terrifying and disorienting to children. It was an era of widespread substance abuse, when alcohol consumption rose rapidly and newly popular drugs like cannabis (sometimes sold in candy and drinks), heroin (praised by many doctors), and cocaine (back when Coke contained the *real* thing) went entirely unregulated. It was an era of rising immigration, a trend that reached its peak during precisely the decades (1900–1919) when the young Lost were entering the labor market. And it was an era of prosperity mixed with a crisis of confidence—when America suddenly became aware of long-standing institutional failures, when “good government” became synonymous with committees and process, when urban wickedness was blamed for destroying the family, and when Deweyesque educational reforms were in vogue.

All this might sound familiar. And what about the kids themselves?

Were they, perhaps, just a wee bit “bad”? Like Thirteeners, Lost kids grew up with a nasty reputation for crime and violence (popular magazines featured stories like “Bad Boy of the Street” and “Making Good Citizens Out of Bad Boys”). From the decade just before to the

decade just after 1900, the number of magazine articles on “juvenile delinquency” skyrocketed.

Were they considered a little dumb? Like Thirteeners, the Lost showed little or no improvement in academic prowess from first birth cohort to last. When young Lost men took the first IQ tests, during the First World War, the results shocked the nation by showing that half the draftees had a “mental age” under twelve. During the 1920s the so-called “threat of the feeble-minded” turned many older voters against foreign immigrants (then a code phrase for stammering young workers) and prompted a Missionary psychologist, Henry Goddard, to apply

just before them). They were, according to F. Scott Fitzgerald, “a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success.”

Did they have a passion for making and spending money? Like Thirteeners, these kids grew up glorifying self-sufficiency. The word “sweatshop” was coined for them, and the motto “It’s up to you” was coined by them. They entered the cash labor market as children at a higher rate than any American generation before or since. Unsupervised by parents or government, they liked to work for themselves (as newsies, bootblacks, scavengers, messengers, cashboys, piece-rate homeworkers). With work



“moron,” “idiot,” and “imbecile” as technical terms in identifying gradations of youthful stupidity. When the Lost came to fill America’s elder age brackets, in the mid-1960s, the gap in educational achievement between Americans over and under age sixty-five was the largest ever measured.

Did they show a bent for self-destruction? Like Thirteeners, the Lost had unusually high suicide rates during their youth, higher than for any other child generation ever measured—until Thirteeners themselves came along. One cause of their low collective self-esteem was an inability to excuse their own failures in the marketplace (something that came easily to the generation born

came money: the Lost built America’s first big children’s cash economy around candy stores and nickelodeons.

Politically retrograde? Other people called them that. Coming of age, new-breed Lost women disappointed middle-aged suffragettes (who were furious at reports that young women voted for Warren Harding because he was handsome), and their men turned a deaf ear to such older campus-touring radicals as Jack London and Upton Sinclair. Fitzgerald afterward observed that it was “characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest at all in politics.” Starting in the 1920s, the Lost blossomed early into this century’s most Republican-leaning generation.

Like Thirteeners, the Lost learned early that you have

to be tough to survive, to flaunt the physical, to avoid showing fear. Like Thirteeners, they had to grow up fast. "At seventeen we were disillusioned and weary," Malcolm Cowley recalled. Like Thirteeners, they came of age with a reputation for shamelessness ("This Flapper of 1915," the older H. L. Mencken commented, "has forgotten how to simper; she seldom blushes; and it is impossible to shock her"). Like Thirteeners, they were nomadic as young men and women, drawn to cities, to markets, to risk, to the dizzying glamour of new technologies. Like Thirteeners, they expected and received little assistance from government. And like Thirteeners, they constantly heard older people tell them that their chapter of history was likely to close the book on human progress.

The "Lost Generation" tag (invented by Gertrude Stein and used by Ernest Hemingway) became popular during the age wars that escalated after the First World War and during Prohibition. The newfound Missionary emphasis on values and decency found its natural target in the "bad" Lost youths—their lust, drunkenness, violence, and "Black Sox" corruptibility. General "Black Jack" Pershing took brutal action against doughboy deserters. Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis sentenced hundreds of younger (and no longer inspirational) Wobblies to hard time, and then turned his attention to cleaning up baseball. The taint followed young adults through what Frederick Lewis Allen later called "the Decade of Bad Manners," an era of gangsters, flappers, expatriates, and real-estate swindlers.

The Lost fought back with just the sort of sarcasm, ridicule, and cynicism that was bound to rile their elders. Through the 1920s embittered thirty-year-olds fought ideology with desperate hedonism, babbittry with endless binges, moral crusades with bathtub gin and opulent sex. "America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history," Fitzgerald bubbled—and John Dos Passos cried, "Down with the middle-aged!" In his 1920 *Atlantic Monthly* article "'These Wild Young People,' By One of Them," John Carter observed that "magazines have been crowded with pessimistic descriptions of the younger generation"—but added, "the older generation had certainly pretty well ruined this world before passing it on to us." Almost everything young adults went in for in the twenties—heavy drinking, loud jazz, flashy clothes, brassy marketing, kinetic dancing, extravagant gambling, sleek cars, tough talk—sent a defiant message to pompous "tired radicals" (as young writers tauntingly called them) about the futility of searching for deeper meaning.

Later on, after the Lost entered midlife with a crash (the Great Depression), they changed character completely. In families they joined their elders in protecting children almost to the point of suffocation. In the media they were the Irving Berlins and Frank Capras who pushed the culture back to practicality and community.

In politics they turned isolationist and conservative, becoming the Liberty Leaguers and Martin, Barton, and Fish types whom FDR and his white-haired Cabinet blamed for impeding many New Deal crusades. Their two Presidents (Ike and Truman) were get-it-done old warriors, known more for personality than candlepower. At the peak of their earning years they tolerated a crushing 91 percent marginal income-tax rate to support the Marshall Plan for world peace and the GI Bill for a younger generation of veterans. As elders, they took pride in having ushered in the prosperous "American High," even while younger people accused them of being cynical, rock-ribbed reactionaries. Back in the 1950s and 1960s America's old people were extremely poor relative to the young, yet repeatedly voted for candidates who promised to cut their benefits.

The Consolations of History

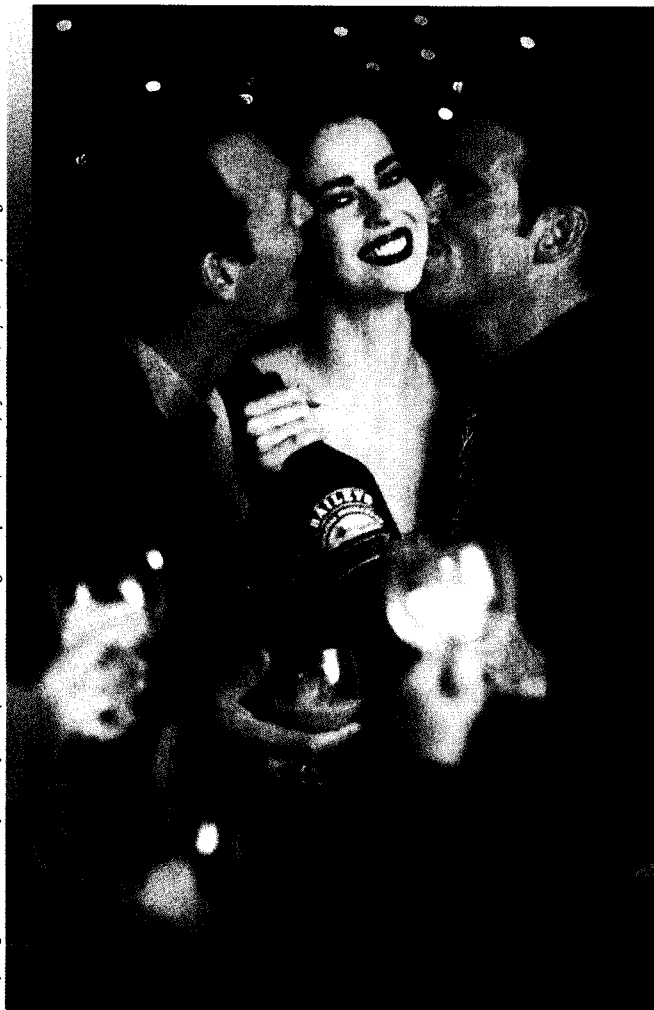
PRIOR TO THE MISSIONARIES AND THE LOST, AMERICA was home to three earlier pairs of generations matching the Boomer and Thirteeners types, dating back to the very first Old World colonists. The experiences of these ancestral pairs give us important clues into how the attitudes and behavior of today's Boomers and Thirteeners could change over the decades ahead.

The lessons to be learned from earlier Boomerlike generations are these: Once they fully occupied midlife, they turned darkly spiritual, seeking the cerebral and the enduring over the faddishly popular. Once in control of public institutions, they stressed character and serenity of soul over process and programs. They approved of social punishments for violators of deeply held values, preaching morality and principle (which, as they grew older, became increasingly associated with age) over fun and materialism (which became increasingly associated with youth). Entering old age, they used their reputation for moral leadership to bring final closure to whatever problem America faced at the time, even at the risk of catastrophe. Whether the peers of Abraham Lincoln or of Sam Adams or of John Winthrop, they had all come of age during eras of spiritual awakening—nothing like the eras of history-bending cataclysm they all presided over as elderly priest-warriors.

History suggests that the Thirteeners life-cycle experience is something else altogether. Every time, the Thirteeners-like generations started out life as risk-taking opportunists, picking their way through the social detritus left behind by their Boomerlike predecessors. And every time, reaching midlife at a time of national crisis and personal burnout, they underwent a profound personality transformation. Their risk-taking gave way to caution, their wildness and alienation turned into exhaustion and conservatism, and their nomadic individualism matured into a preference for strong community life. The same



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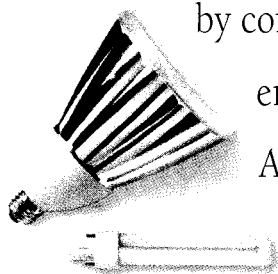
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unruly rebels and adventurers who alarmed the Colonies during the 1760s later became the crusty old Patrick Henrys and George Washingtons who warned younger statesmen against gambling with the future. The same gold-chasing forty-niners and Civil War brigands whom Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. called a generation whose "hearts were touched with fire" became the stodgy "Old Guard" Victorians of the Gilded Era. The same gin-fizz "Flaming Youth" who electrified America during the 1920s became the Norman Rockwells and Dwight Eisenhoweres who calmed America during the 1950s.

All these generations repeatedly found themselves in situations that are becoming familiar to Thirteeners. When something went right, they always got less than their share of the credit; when something went wrong, they always got more than their share of the blame. In contrast, the Boomerlike generations always found a way to claim more than their share of the credit and accept less than their share of blame. Small wonder, then, that the Boom types kept stepping in and out of generational arguments.

If history tells us that the Boom-Thirteenth quarrel will worsen over the coming decade, it also suggests when and how this new generation gap could resolve itself. The experience of their like-minded ancestors suggests that once Boomers start entering old age, they will ease their attacks on Thirteeners. Once they see their values focus taking firm root in American institutions—and once their hopes are fixed on a new and more optimistic (post-Thirteenth) generation—Boomers will lose interest in the quarrel. As they enter midlife, Thirteeners will likewise tire of goading Boomers. As they change their life tack from risk to caution, they will quit trying to argue about Boomer goals and will focus their attention on how to achieve their own goals practically, with no more hurt than is absolutely necessary.

The key to a favorable resolution of the Boom-Thirteenth clash may lie in one of its inherent causes. To find this cause, visit America's hospital nurseries or day-care centers or primary-school classrooms, grades K through 5. It's the fledgling "Millennial Generation" of Jessica McClure and Baby M, of Jebbie Bush and Al Gore III, whose birth years will ultimately reach from 1982 or so to sometime around 2000. Recall that one big reason Boomers are so intent on policing Thirteener behavior is to clear and clean the path for these Babies on Board to grow up as the smartest, best-behaved, most civic-minded

ed kids in the history of humankind—or, at a minimum, a whole lot better than Thirteeners. And while Thirteeners would hardly put it the same way, they, too, are eager to reseed the desert that was their youth and help the nation treat the next round of kids to a happier start in life.

Has this happened before? Yes—most recently when today's GI seniors were children. Midlife Missionaries fussed mightily over these kids, praying that they would turn out as good as the Lost had been bad. And by all accounts that's just what the GIs became: from the sunny optimism of Pollyanna to the team spirit of the Rooney-Garland teen films, from the good deeds performed by the uniformed CCC to the globe-conquering accomplishments of soldiers whom the Missionary General George Marshall lauded as "the best damned kids in the world." GIs responded to the sacrifices of their parents with respectful deference.

America still does not treat children very well. Older generations still burden them with mounting debt and decaying public works, and tolerate an economic order that condemns many more children than older people to poverty and unmet health-care needs. But look around. From bipartisan proposals to increase Headstart and Medicaid funding for toddlers to surging popular interest in elementary schools, from the crack-down on deadbeat dads to the call for infant safety seats on airplanes, a national consensus is emerging that the childhood world must and will be repaired. It won't happen in time to save today's inner-city teens and \$7-an-hour twenty-somethings, but maybe it will in time to save the wanted, Scoutlike kids coming up just behind Bart Simpson.

If, slowly but surely, Millennials receive the kind of family protection and public generosity that GIs enjoyed as children, then they could come of age

early in the next century as a group much like the GIs of the 1920s and 1930s—as a stellar (if bland) generation of rationalists, team players, and can-do civic builders. Two decades from now Boomers entering old age may well see in their grown Millennial children an effective instrument for saving the world, while Thirteeners entering midlife will shower kindnesses on a younger generation that is getting a better deal out of life (though maybe a bit less fun) than they ever got at a like age. Study after story after column will laud these "best damn kids in the world" as heralding a resurgent American greatness. And, for a while at least, no one will talk about a generation gap. □

*Constantly
stepping into
post-Boom desert-
scapes and
suffering because
of it, Thirteeners
see Boomers
as a generation
that was given
everything—from
a Happy Days
present to a
Tomorrowland
future—and then
threw it away.*



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SEASON PREVIEW

North America's best-loved holiday traditions

YULETIDE AT WINTERTHUR

Winterthur, Delaware
Through January 3

The Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, six miles northwest of Wilmington, re-creates holiday celebrations of the 18th and 19th centuries. This year's Yuletide tour features a replica of a Christmas tree described by Charles Dickens in 1850. The guided tour, which attracts more than 24,000 visitors a year, features 20 rooms and displays decorated in period style: one represents the White House on New Year's Day during Jefferson's administration; another duplicates a St. Nicholas Day dinner served to the New-York Historical Society in 1810 as described by Washington Irving. For more information: Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, DE 19735; (800) 448-3883 or (302) 888-4600.

HISTORIC TORONTO CHRISTMAS

Toronto, Ontario
November 18-January 6

Visitors to Toronto this holiday season may see representations of 19th-century Christmas traditions displayed in three of the city's historic houses: a Dickens Christmas at the Colborne Lodge, a Victorian Christmas at Mackenzie House, and an Edwardian Christmas at Spadina. A Kissing Bough, a decoration made of evergreens, fruits, and candles which predates the Christmas tree, adorns the Mackenzie house. The traditions of Twelfth Night can be relived with hands-on activities at all three of the houses: baking gingerbread cookies in a wood-burning stove, making a Twelfth Night crown to adorn a holiday

cake, or writing an old-fashioned thank-you card. Admission is \$4.50 for adults, \$3.50 for children. For more information: Toronto Historical Board, Exhibition Place, Toronto, ONT, M6K 3C3; (416) 392-6827.

HOLIDAYS IN THE CITY

Norfolk, Virginia
November 21-December 31

This historic maritime city will present a holiday festival of lights for more than 100,000 visitors. A parade featuring some 25 lighted floats, marching bands, and clowns will begin the festivities on November 21. That night nearly 10 miles of lights will outline the Norfolk skyline in a grand illumination. The harbor will be aglow from the hundreds of decorated boats participating in a lighted parade on the Elizabeth River on November 28. Norfolk also offers a choreographed fireworks display on New Year's Eve, a traditional yule-log lighting, and trips to the Norfolk Naval Base to see vessels decked in holiday lights. For more information: Downtown Norfolk Council, 201 Granby Street, Suite 101, Norfolk, VA 23510; (804) 623-1757.

CHRISTMAS AT THE HENRY FORD MUSEUM & GREENFIELD VILLAGE

Dearborn, Michigan
November 27-January 3

One of the world's largest indoor/outdoor museums puts up a three-story-high Christmas tree and a gingerbread village, and invites guests to a month of seasonal activities. Special displays and activities include "Visions of Christmas," a photographic record of family celebrations. A traditional 1870s Christmas will be re-created, with demonstrations of period cooking, antique decorations, and gift-making. Costumed interpreters in various village homes will be available to answer any questions. A mid-19th-century family-style meal with music and entertainment will be presented at the Village's Eagle Tavern, while the Lovett Hall Ballroom will host a '40s-style Big Band evening of dinner and dancing; reservations for both programs are required. For more information or reservations: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Box 1970, Dearborn, MI 48121; (313) 271-1620.

MINERS' CHRISTMAS

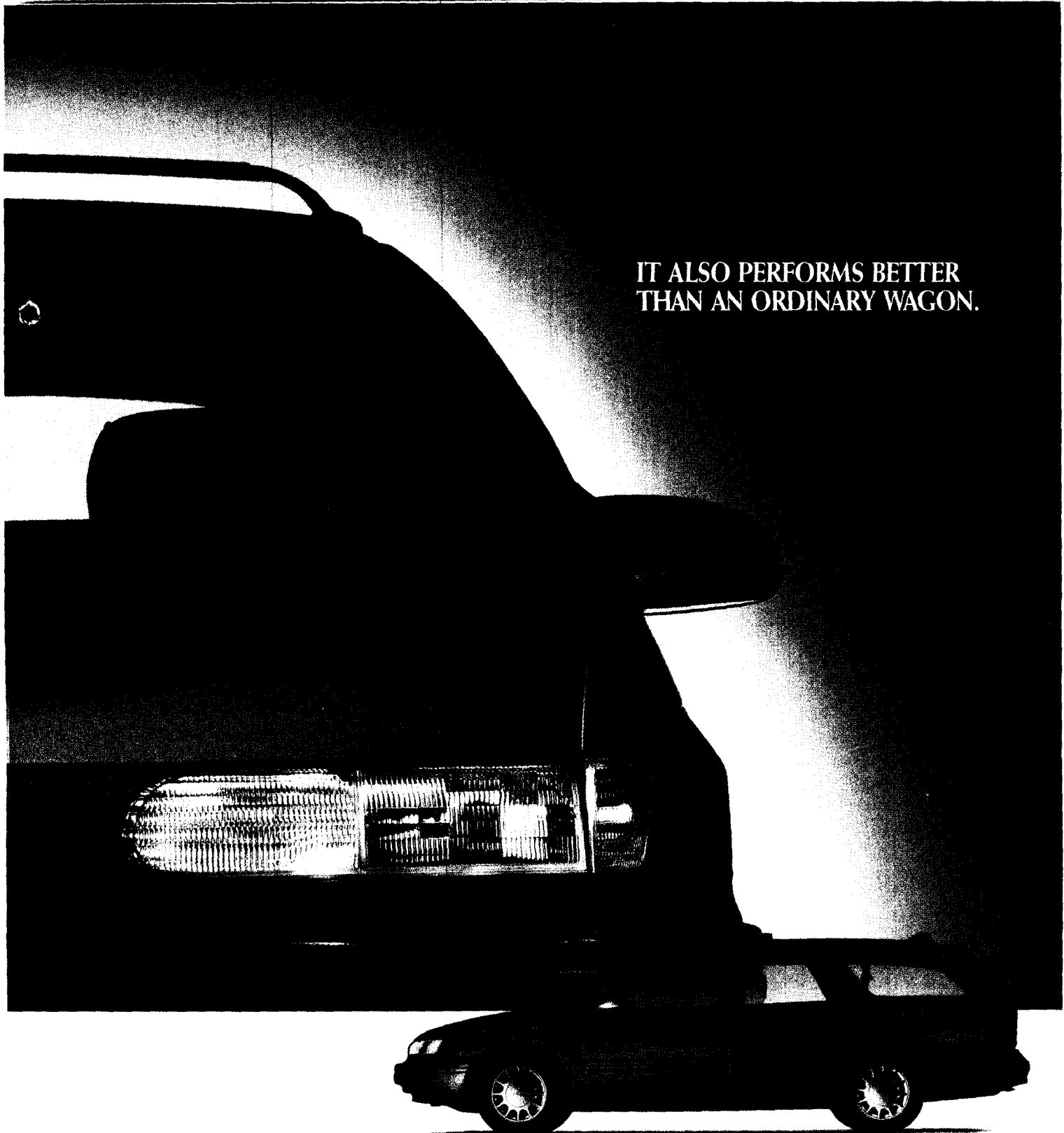
Columbia, California
December 5-6, 12-13

Visitors to this tiny town and state park 70 miles north of Yosemite will see how the holidays were celebrated by the miners of California's Gold Rush. The town's original buildings, which have been completely restored, will display vignettes and decorations typical of a miners' Christmas in the 1850s. The park will be opened on weekend evenings to present lamplit tours of the town, a candlelit Los Posados procession, and a costumed Victorian feast. All events are free. For more information: Columbia Docent Association, Box 367, Columbia, CA 95310; (209) 532-1479.

FIRST NIGHT CELEBRATIONS

Boston, Massachusetts
December 31

Boston celebrates its 17th annual First Night this year. More than 90 cities, including Sydney, Australia, have used Boston as the inspiration for their own First Nights. Boston's New Year's celebration of the arts features over 150 performances and exhibits at 70 indoor and outdoor sites throughout the city. Among the arts that more than half a million revelers will enjoy are Dixieland jazz, puppetry, modern dance, ice sculpture, opera, and environmental-art installations. The night is capped by a laser show and spectacular fireworks over the harbor. Outdoor events are free; a \$7 button allows entry to all indoor events. For more information on the Boston celebration or a list of cities celebrating First Night: First Night, Inc., 20 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116; (617) 542-1399.



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The parts of Lyndon Johnson have been extensively analyzed in multivolume biographies, miniseries, and documentaries. In this essay a distinguished historian looks at the whole of Johnson, using his region as the interpretive key to the man

THE OLD COWHAND FROM DIXIE

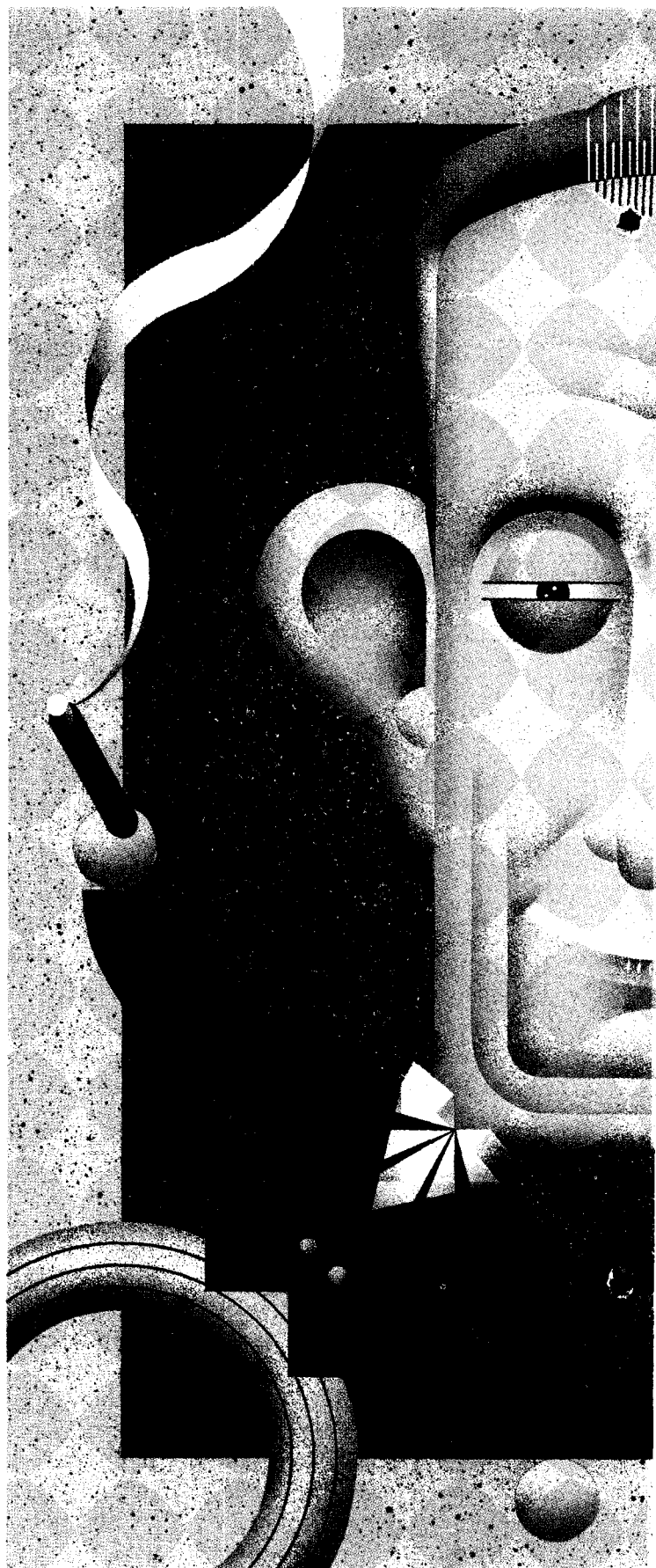
BY WILLIAM E. LEUCHTENBURG

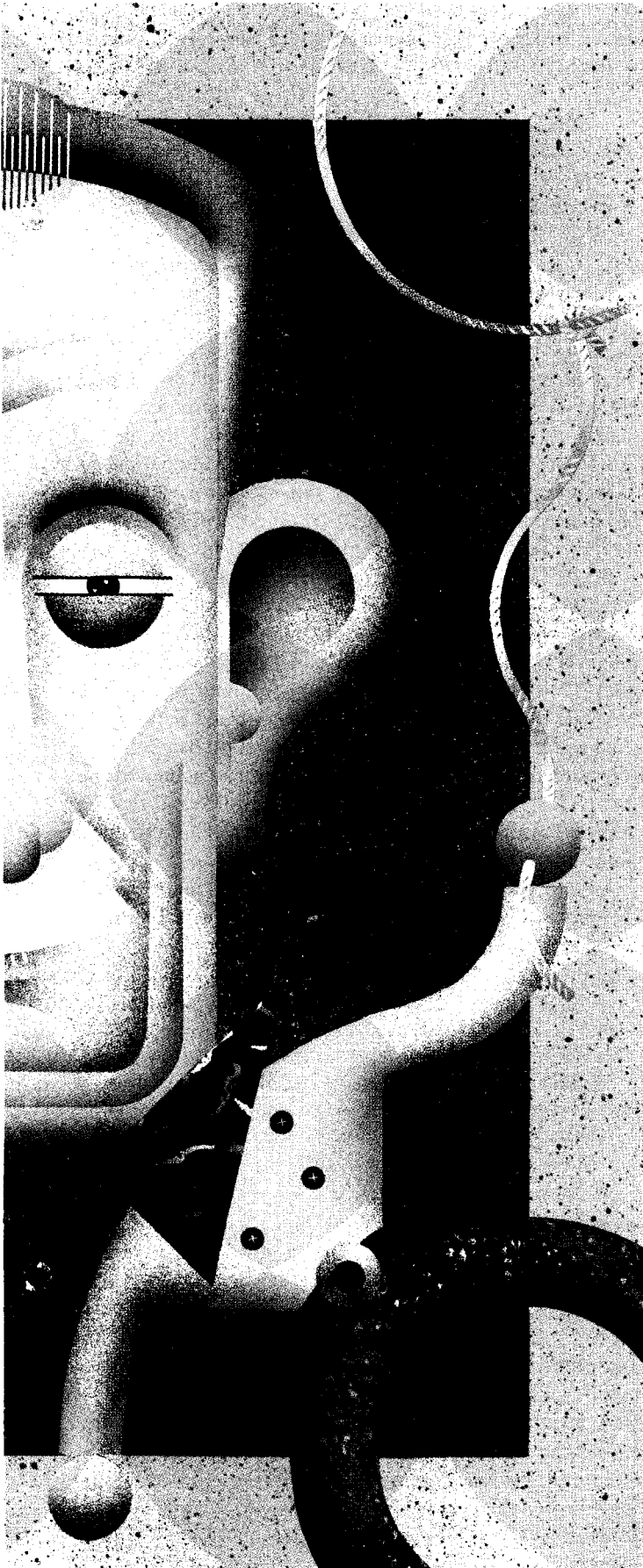


NEITHER LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON NOR THE country could ever get quite straight where he came from. Much of the time he saw himself, and was seen by others, as a southerner, born and bred in a state that had left the Union for the Confederacy. On certain occasions, though, he exhibited himself as a rancher from the West. One commentator even suggested that Johnson might be “the last Frontiersman.” Others, noting that he “represented a Texas district that straddled, like a congressman on horseback, the West and the South,” said that Johnson was neither southern nor western but a man of Texas, the onetime Lone Star Republic that continued to behave like a separate country. Still others chimed in that he came from none of these places but was a figure of the national scene whose only real abode was Washington, D.C.

Johnson eventually offered his own view, but even it was inconclusive. In his memoirs he wrote, “There were no ‘darkies’ or plantations in the arid hill country where I grew up. I never sat on my parents’ or grandparents’ knees listening to nostalgic tales of the antebellum South. In Stonewall and Johnson City I never was a part of the Old Confederacy.” Yet he added elsewhere in the book, “That Southern heritage meant a great deal to me. It gave me a feeling of belonging and a sense of continuity.”

Lyndon claimed kin in almost every southern state. He could trace the Baines line of the family to North Carolina and the Johnson side to Georgia, with offshoots in Alabama and Mississippi. He took pride in one ancestor who had been governor of Kentucky and another who had been a congressman from Tennessee. “So many of





my ancestors come from Kentucky," Johnson told a crowd at the Louisville courthouse in the 1964 campaign, "that I can sing 'My Old Kentucky Home' with almost as much feeling as you." After arriving in Texas, one of his forebears, as Johnson's biographer Robert Dallek has noted, "built a traditional Old South mansion—a two-story house with white verandas attended by slaves and surrounded by cotton fields and pastures." One of his ancestors enlisted in the Confederate cavalry and had his horse shot out from under him, and when Johnson's father courted his mother, he took her to a Confederate reunion.

A good many of Johnson's contemporaries, though, regarded him not as a southerner but as a westerner. Johnson City, Texas, is, by some miles, farther west than Omaha or Fargo, and Lyndon was raised in a land not of magnolia blossoms and Carolina wrens but of prickly pear, rattlesnakes, and the nine-banded armadillo. In 1946 he campaigned with a western band that strummed "Home on the Range" and "Sioux City Sue." Later another Texan, Gene Autry, joined the caravan to help out, in the words of one reporter, "that old vote-wrangler from Johnson City" by crooning lyrics such as "I'm back in the saddle again" and "Just a ridin', rockin', ropin', / Poundin' leather all day long." At an Oklahoma state fair Johnson surprised his entourage by leaping on a palomino and parading it in front of the stands, one hand on the reins like an old buckaroo, the other waving his Stetson to the crowd in the manner of Buffalo Bill.

Not everyone, though, accepted Johnson's projection of himself as the old cowhand. "His self-painted portrait of a cattleman tending his herds," his press secretary George Reedy has said, "was difficult to accept with a straight face. He *did* know something about cattle, but he 'tended' them from a Lincoln Continental with a chest full of ice and a case of Scotch and soda in the back seat."

Teaching It Either Way

ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER JOHNSON WAS primarily western or southern, one of LBJ's anecdotes is suggestive. In a tale he loved to tell, an applicant for a teaching job is asked by the school board whether the world is round or flat. "I can teach it either way," the man replies. In like manner Johnson could, and did, tell it either way with respect to his sectional identification.

Whatever else Johnson might be, everyone agreed that he was a Texan—which might make him southern or western or both or neither. His great-granduncle signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, fought under Sam Houston at the decisive battle of San Jacinto, and served in the First Congress of the Lone Star Republic, where he drafted the legislation creating the Texas Rangers. His maternal great-grandfather edited the first Baptist newspaper in Texas, drew Sam Houston to the Baptist faith in the church at which he preached, and was

chosen president of Baylor University. Johnson's father served five terms in the Texas legislature, to which his maternal grandfather had also been elected.

LBJ's fascination with the tale of the Alamo became almost obsessive. When he was six, his mother taught him a poem on the massacre, and he grew up hearing of how his father had drafted the Alamo Purchase Bill to restore the mission. A newspaper wrote, "Santa Anna took the Alamo—that was 1836. Sam Johnson saved the Alamo—that was 1905." In Korea in 1966 he got so carried away that he said his great-great-grandfather had died at the Alamo. As Hugh Sidey has written, "It was something that should have been, at least in Johnson's mind, and so he just said it was so."

If a forebear at the Alamo was a figment of his imagination, Johnson could lay legitimate claim to heroic ancestry on the Texas frontier. He told and retold the story of his grandmother's courage and guile in escaping a Comanche raid in 1869. When an Indian party killed and scalped two neighbors, Johnson's grandfather joined a posse that pursued the raiders into the hills, leaving his wife and child alone. As she was drawing water from a spring, Eliza spotted another party of Comanches and, undetected, raced back to her cabin. She grabbed her infant and dropped down into a root cellar, cleverly manipulated a stick to pull a braided rug over a trap door, and, with the babe in her arms hushed by a diaper tied over her mouth, hid for hours in the darkness until it was safe to emerge. On another occasion Johnson's grandfather and granduncle drove 7,000 longhorns up the Chisholm Trail, and when his granduncle returned from the last drive to Abilene, he set his Colt revolver on a table alongside his saddlebags, from which he counted out \$100,000 in gold coins.

Quite a few observers, though, concluded that the key to understanding Johnson was recognizing that he belonged to no section—to the Southwest no more than to the South or the West—for after coming to Washington as a congressman's aide, early in the Depression, he developed a national, not a sectional, identity. One columnist wrote,

Mr. Johnson is not intrinsically a Texas rancher. . . . He is seen in his real self in the midst of political strife and controversy in Washington. . . . He is like the ancient Romans. The historian Will Durant says they could not wait to get their country seats, but, once there, paced the atrium until they could leap into their chariots to return to Rome.

The Racial Stain

ANATIONAL IDENTITY HE MAY HAVE HAD, BUT FOR two decades no one could differentiate his behavior on civil-rights legislation from that of other congressmen in the southern bloc. From 1937 on, Johnson consistently opposed civil-rights measures that came before Congress. He also exasperated liberals by the way he snuggled up to the Senate leader of

the anti-civil-rights battalion, Richard B. Russell. "I am young and impressionable," he wrote Russell shamelessly in the fall of 1949, the year he arrived in the Senate, "so I just try to do what that Old Master, the junior senator from Georgia, taught me how to do." In 1952 he worked indefatigably to make Russell his party's choice for President of the United States.

Yet if most of the country in 1956 still saw Johnson as a sectional figure, he had, from the very beginning of his service in the Senate, been distancing himself from his colleagues in the former Confederate states. When southern senators caucused in January of 1949 to plan strategy on protecting the right to filibuster, Johnson, who was just beginning his six-year term, was conspicuously absent. He never did join the southern bloc. Furthermore, unlike many other southern legislators, he believed that a solution to the race problem was imperative for the nation. As Congressman Richard Bolling put it, "While he might have hoped that the civil-rights problem would go away, he knew it would not."

By 1957 Johnson, then the Senate majority leader, had concluded that the pressure for a civil-rights statute was irresistible, and that he should be at the head of the forces of change, particularly because of his southern origins. The 1957 act did not amount to much. It was, the NAACP leader Roy Wilkins said, "soup made from the shadow of a thin chicken that had starved to death." Still, Johnson could reasonably claim that he had achieved the first civil-rights law of the twentieth century and that he had, in Tom Wicker's words, taken "the racial stain of the South off of him."

As it turned out, Johnson's leadership on the 1957 civil-rights bill constituted a decisive departure. By 1957, Theodore White later wrote, Johnson

had been swept far from his Southern anchorages to a sense of the broader flow of the country's politics. Pressed by these national forces, enticed by the Presidential campaign of 1960, in which he hoped to be a candidate, he followed a new direction in his voting. He broke more and more consistently with his old friends, until, in 1960, he defied them on eight identifiable roll calls to vote *for* civil rights.

As Johnson, in his role as Senate majority leader, increasingly took a national rather than a sectional perspective, criticism of him in the South mounted, a smoldering resentment that burst into flame in February of 1960, when Johnson outfoxed southern opponents of civil rights by calling up a minor bill and then tacking civil-rights amendments onto it. The ruse set off a brush fire that raged across the South. The Shreveport *Journal* said he was "despised by the people he has betrayed," and a Florida newspaper called him a "Machiavelli," a "Fifth Columnist," and a "Southern Benedict Arnold." More biting still was the conclusion of a Mississippi congressman, John Bell Williams. "The people," he said, "have more respect for a carpetbagger than they do for a scalawag."

"Let's Beat Judas"

SOUTHERNERS WHO BELIEVED THAT JOHNSON'S sudden enthusiasm for civil rights derived from political ambition discounted other motives too easily but were surely right in thinking that the Texas senator knew he had to develop an identity free of the taint of magnolia if he hoped to reach the White House. In 1957 one of Johnson's aides sent him a memo saying, "Western Films and Stars are very popular right now as you know. And I can't think of a more perfect *Western Star* than the tall, dark and handsome, horse-riding, gun-toting, shootin' 'n' huntin' Lyndon Johnson of the Hill Country of Texas." She thought an episode in which LBJ would be the lead rider "in a cloud of dust . . . coming over the rise . . . in back of the ranch house" would be a natural for Ralph Edwards's popular television program *This Is Your Life*. "This kind of appearance," she emphasized, "would . . . discredit those who write of you as a *Southerner*."

Johnson, with his image of himself as a descendant of frontiersmen, took naturally to this notion. In 1958 he shucked off his designation as southern by beginning to

Johnson quickly found that though he was on a national ticket, most Americans still thought of him as a senator from Dixie. Though he later changed his mind, he initially said he would not campaign in Chicago, California, or New York City, because "I'm not going to let the liberals cut me up and embarrass Jack Kennedy. And they will, just because I'm a Texan and a southerner." When Johnson took to the campaign trail in the North, a Brooklyn man, listening to his accent, said, "It makes your throat hurt to hear him."

Some southerners, too, rejected Johnson's message contemptuously. The initials LBJ, his critics said, stood for "Let's Beat Judas." When Johnson arrived in Dallas, he encountered an ugly, screaming mob carrying banners bearing "TEXAS TRAITOR" and similar legends. A Republican congressman from Dallas pumped up and down a placard reading "HE SOLD OUT TO THE YANKEES." Expensively dressed debutantes and young society matrons spat at Johnson and his wife, and one demonstrator struck Lady Bird on the head with a placard.

Nonetheless, when Kennedy won narrowly in November, many analysts credited Johnson with the slim margin



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attend the caucus of western Democrats. At the Western States Democratic Conference of 1960, seventy-five Texans cried "Howdy" at every opportunity as they hailed "that great westerner" Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Johnson, though, never succeeded in ridding himself of the onus of the section of his birth. In January of 1960 he told reporters, "I don't want anybody to vote for me because I am a southerner. But I don't want anybody to vote against me because I am a southerner, either." At the 1960 convention, however, John F. Kennedy's strategy of depicting Johnson as a sectional, not a national, figure prevailed. The outcome led Johnson to a mournful conclusion—that he had been denied the presidential nomination only because sectional bigotry against a southerner was stronger than religious bigotry against a Catholic.

When Kennedy, to the astonishment and even dismay of his advisers, offered Johnson the vice-presidential slot, he did so not because he thought of Johnson as a man of national stature, certainly not because he regarded him as a representative westerner, but quite simply because the majority leader was a southerner who might be able to hold his section for Kennedy in November.

of victory. In a postmortem, "Why It Wasn't Nixon," *U.S. News & World Report*, saying that its answers reflected Nixon's own conclusions, answered the question "What states in the South would Nixon have carried if Johnson had not been on the ticket?" with the response "Obviously, Texas. And there's no question about the Carolinas." Some went even further. Senator James Eastland thought that if Johnson had not been on the ticket, Kennedy would not have taken any southern state and would have gone down to defeat, and former Texas Governor Allan Shivers later remarked, "There's no question in my mind but what Johnson on the ticket was responsible for the Kennedy-Johnson election. You'll get lots of agreement on that."

"I'm Going to Run Over You"

WHEN, THREE YEARS LATER, THE MURDER OF John Kennedy sent Johnson to the White House, commentators stressed that he was the first resident of a southern state to become President in a century—the first since another Johnson had taken power, also as the result of an assassi-

nation. Not a few white southerners rejoiced that the country at last had a President who spoke with a familiar accent. A limousine driver in Greensboro, North Carolina, said, "He sounds like one of us!" A Birmingham factory foreman remarked, "That was a rotten way for Kennedy to go, but I'll be frank with you, I think Johnson will be a big improvement. He understands the South." Civil-rights advocates, on the other hand, especially blacks, expressed dismay.

White supremacists and civil-rights activists both misread Johnson. He had long since ceased to condone racism, and he was determined, as leader not of a section but of a nation, to reach out to a constituency above as well as below the Mason-Dixon line. "I'm going to be the best friend the Negro ever had," he told a member of the White House staff. "I've lived in the South a long time, and I know what hatred does to a man." Within a short time of his taking office, black leaders had a decidedly more favorable perception of him. After meeting with Johnson, Martin Luther King Jr. declared, "As a southerner, I am happy to know that a fellow southerner is in the White House who is concerned about civil rights."

Johnson sealed this impression by the vigor with which he pushed what became the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Shortly after succeeding Kennedy, according to one account, Johnson summoned his former mentor, Senator Russell, to the Oval Office and told him, "Dick, you've got to get out of my way. I'm going to run over you. I don't intend to cavil or compromise. I don't want to hurt you. But don't stand in my way." Russell continued to oppose the civil-rights bill, but he was increasingly aware that with his former ally committed to wielding all the authority of the White House against him, resistance was futile. Bill Moyers recalls, "Dick Russell would say to me, 'Now you tell Lyndon . . . that I've been expecting the rod for a long time, and I'm sorry that it's from his hand the rod must be wielded, but I'd rather it be his hand than anybody else's I know. Tell him to cry a little when he uses it.'"

As the bitter struggle over the civil-rights bill dragged on month after month in the first half of 1964—the southern filibuster lasted eighty-three days—southern disaffection with Johnson mounted; but, undeterred, he overcame his southern foes to drive it through. His victory at the end of such a nasty and protracted battle appeared to provide an occasion for celebration. On the night after he signed the bill into law, however, Johnson told Bill Moyers gloomily, "I think we just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come."

In the 1964 campaign the Republican Party fielded a presidential candidate who catered to the white supremacists: Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, who had said bluntly, "We're not going to get the Negro vote as a bloc in 1964 or 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are." He did just that when, during the struggle

over the civil-rights bill, he cast one of the few votes from outside the South against breaking the southern filibuster. In offering the electorate such a stark choice, Goldwater gave southern Democrats an opportunity to demonstrate their outrage at LBJ's leadership on race by crossing over to the Republicans.

To hold the South for the Democratic Party, Johnson adopted two different personae. Often he gave a stock speech in which he asked for "a truly national party which is stranger to no region, . . . knows no North, no South, no East, no West." At other times, however, Johnson reminded southerners that he was one of them. When he spoke in Georgia in May of 1964, *The New York Times* reported that he "identified himself wholeheartedly as a Southerner with family roots in the red earth of Georgia."

Johnson made his boldest move when he sent his wife on an eight-state tour of the South, a trip she was eager to take. She told her aides, "I know the Civil Rights Act was right, and I don't mind saying so. But I'm tired of people making . . . snide jokes about the corn-pone and red-neck. . . . I want to say to those people . . . that I love the South, I'm proud of the South. . . . And I want them to know that as far as *this* President and his wife are concerned, the South belongs to the United States."

At each stop before Lady Bird spoke, the train "commander," the loyal Louisiana congressman Hale Boggs, would warm up the crowd by asking, "How many of you all know what red-eye gravy is?" After getting the expected hand waves of assent, he would respond, "Well, so do I. And so does Lyndon Johnson!" He would promise, "When Lyndon Johnson is re-elected we're gonna have ham in every pot. We're gonna have ham and grits on every plate. We're gonna have ham with plenty of good ol' red-eye gravy." Having made this profound campaign pledge, he would continue, "You know what we had on this train this morning? Hominy grits. About noontime we're gonna start servin' turnip greens and black-eyed peas. Later on, farther south, we're gonna have some crawfish bisque, some red beans and rice, and some creole gumbo." His face wreathed in "a hush-puppy grin," in the words of a campaign worker, Boggs would then conclude, "Now, about this race. You're not gonna turn your back on the first southern-born President in a hundred years?" The crowd, laughing and smiling, would answer with a shout: "All the way with LBJ."

When the train pulled into Union Station in New Orleans, in Hale Boggs's home state, on the night of October 9, Lady Bird found the President there to greet her. Johnson had come with more in mind than being a dutiful husband. He knew he was being hard pressed in the Deep South by Goldwater, and few ambitions were dearer to him than his desire to sweep the South. Nonetheless, in a year of alarms about a vicious "white backlash," Johnson brushed aside counsel that he soft-pedal the race issue, and decided to make a major statement on behalf

of civil rights, "not in New York or Chicago or Los Angeles," he later noted, "but in New Orleans—near home, in my own backyard."

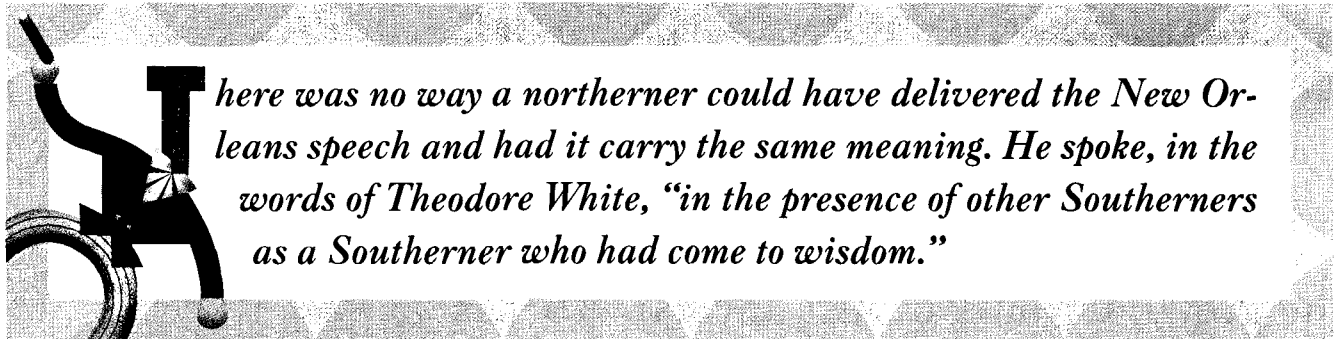
At a banquet in New Orleans that night, he told more than 2,000 people, "Whatever your views are, we have a Constitution and we have a Bill of Rights, and we have the law of the land, and two thirds of the Democrats in the Senate voted for [the civil-rights bill] and three fourths of the Republicans. I signed it, and I am going to enforce it, . . . and I think any man that is worthy of the high office of President is going to do the same thing. . . . I am not going to let them build up the hate and try to buy my people by appealing to their prejudice." "The applause," Johnson observed drily some years later, "was less than overwhelming."

Undismayed, he plunged ahead to tell the story of a great southern senator, near the end of his days, who had once spoken eloquently to the young Sam Rayburn, recently arrived in the House, about the critical economic needs of their section, and who had then added, "Sammy, I wish I felt a little better. . . . I would like to go back down there and make them one more Democratic speech. I just

licely chided Southerners for their treatment of blacks," George Reedy has written, he "drew applause that is still ringing in my ears. He could be superb!" The Texas progressive Bill Brammer has said, "The highlight of the 1964 campaign, a highlight any way you look at it, was the speech in New Orleans, what people call the 'nigra, nigra, nigra' speech. It galvanized me. I was ready to go out and kill. That's how great he was."

"We Shall Overcome"

THE NEW ORLEANS CROWD REWARDED JOHNSON with a mighty ovation, but a month later Louisiana denied him its electoral votes—by registering a thumping 57 percent for Goldwater. The Arizona senator also walloped Johnson in South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia, and in Mississippi, where Republicans had long been anathema, Goldwater rolled over the President with an incredible 87 percent. Goldwater's success in capturing five Deep South states sometimes led observers to overlook Johnson's still greater achievement of winning six southern states, but the



There was no way a northerner could have delivered the New Orleans speech and had it carry the same meaning. He spoke, in the words of Theodore White, "in the presence of other Southerners as a Southerner who had come to wisdom."

feel like I have one in me. The poor old state, they haven't heard a Democratic speech in thirty years." Believing, arms outstretched, Johnson gave his Louisiana listeners the ancient senator's final words: "All they ever hear at election time is *Nigra, Nigra, Nigra!*"

The audience let out a gasp. "This took the breath away from most of us," a Washington correspondent has written. "The crowded ballroom became strangely silent." Jack Valenti remembered, "Over that audience there flowed a consternation that could be felt everywhere in the auditorium. It was a physical thing, surprise, awe; ears heard what they plainly could not hear, a cataclysmic wave hit everyone there with stunning and irreversible force." Then the audience rose to its feet and the hall was "rocked by a thunderous cheer" that lasted fully five minutes.

Many of his most acerbic critics have affirmed that this was Johnson's finest hour. There was no way a northerner could have delivered that speech and had it carry the same meaning. He spoke, in the words of Theodore White, "in the presence of other Southerners as a Southerner who had come to wisdom." When Johnson "pub-

raw totals are deceptive, for they conceal evidence of dramatic slippage. Johnson ran better in rock-ribbed Maine and in Vermont than in any state of the former Confederacy. Even more significant, Goldwater captured a majority of the ballots cast by whites in every state of the former Confederacy save Texas.

Johnson learned how far the white South had departed from him when, in 1965, he demanded a voting-rights law in an address to Congress in which, identifying himself with the anthem of the civil-rights movement, he declared, "And we *shall* overcome"—words that infuriated southern senators. At breakfast the following morning Spessard Holland, of Florida, asked angrily, "Did you hear ol' Lyndon say 'we shall overcome'?" The moderate Lister Hill, of Alabama, turning to Richard Russell, asked, "Dick, tell me something. You trained that boy. . . . What happened to that boy?" The Georgia senator responded, "I just don't know, Lister. . . . He's a turncoat if there ever was one."

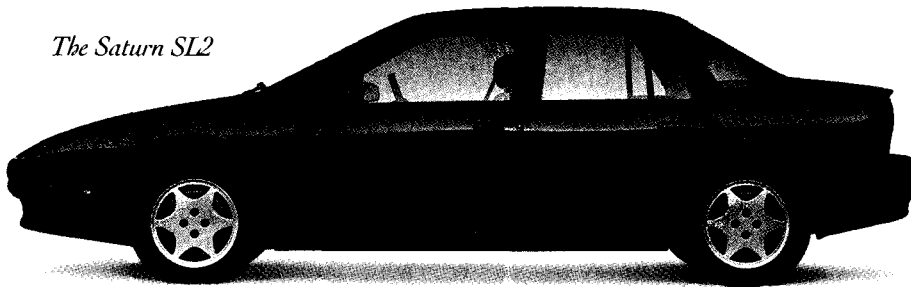
Yet despite all the evidence that Johnson had become in the 1960s a man with strong national priorities, he could never altogether escape his reputation as a section-

Every year, Miss Reusswig's third-graders learn how to write a proper letter. And they find it is a useful skill, what with their regular field trips into nearby Washington, D.C. (Not long ago, twenty-three thank-you notes arrived at the Ghanaian Embassy.)

As for Miss Reusswig, she's a pretty good letter writer herself. And she wrote to us. About the car we were building for her.

She wanted us to know *for whom* we were building that SL2. That blue-green one with

The Saturn SL2



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the grey interior. Not just any car. *Her* car. She even sent us a picture of herself.

Well, we liked that. We read her letter and sent it down the line, so everyone who built her car could see who she was.



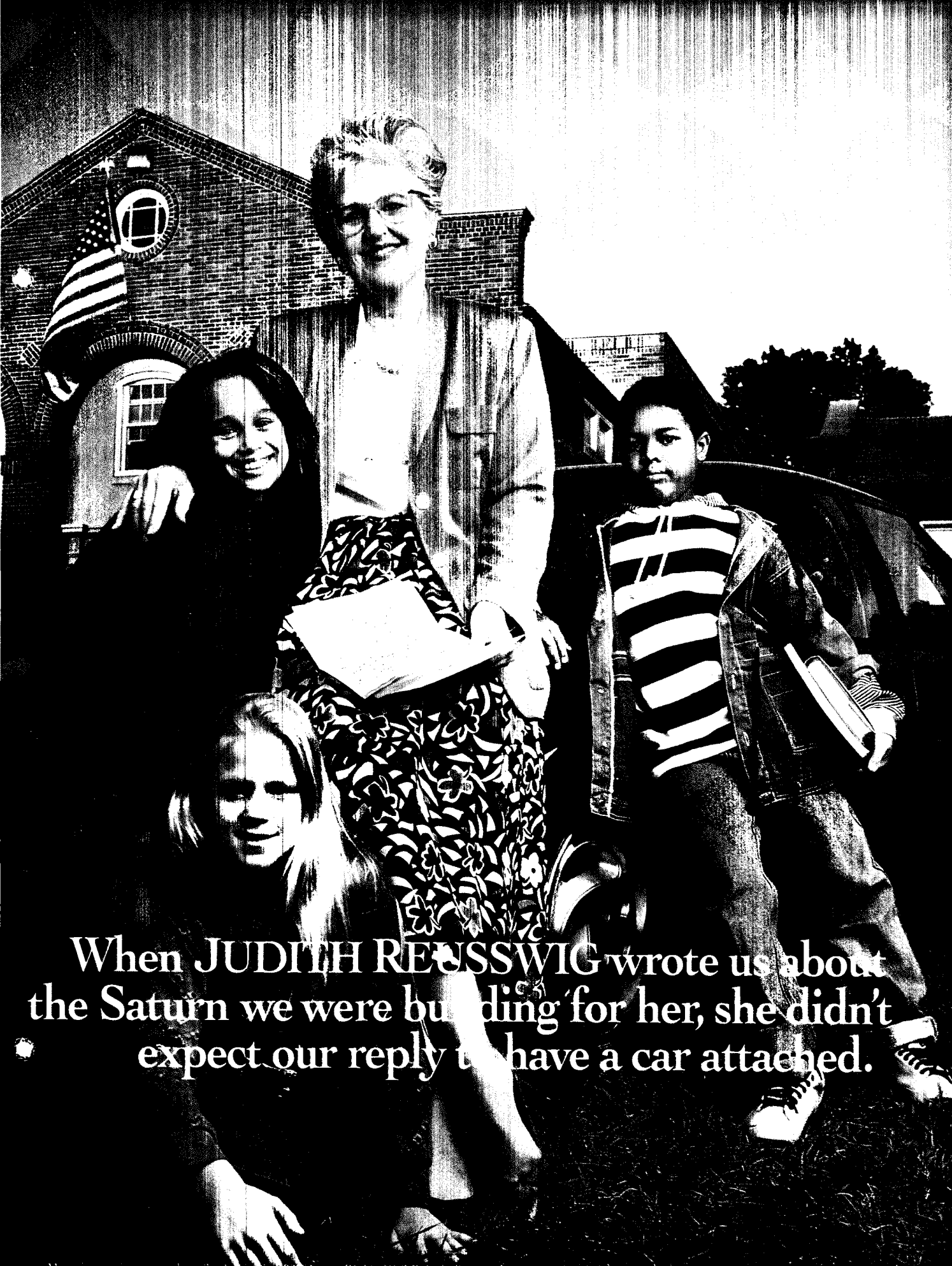
We liked her idea so much, in fact, that we placed her picture in her new SL2's glove box so she'd know we'd gotten it. Then we all signed a poster in reply, thanking her for buying a Saturn, and we sent that along as well.

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alist. In 1965, at a time of national outrage over violence against civil-rights workers in the South, demonstrators outside the White House carried placards reading "LBJ, OPEN YOUR EYES, SEE THE SICKNESS OF THE SOUTH, SEE THE HORRORS OF YOUR HOMELAND." In his memoirs Johnson commented, "Once again my Southern heritage was thrown in my face. I was hurt, deeply hurt."

Johnson encountered sectional difficulty of a different sort in his conduct of foreign affairs. To those in European chancelleries Johnson seemed "a caricature out of an American western," one writer noted. "He was . . . Western rather than Eastern, and the world had long since grown accustomed to dealing in the international arena with Americans who were either Easterners or acted like them—with Harrimans and Roosevelts and Stevensons and Kennedys."

More particularly, he appeared to be a Texan who conflated the situation in Vietnam with that which had existed on the nineteenth-century southwestern frontier. Johnson liked to ask visitors what the difference was between a sheriff and a Texas Ranger. The answer: "Well, the Ranger is one that when you plug him, . . . he just keeps coming. And we must let the rest of the world know that . . . if they ever hit us, it is not going to stop us—we are just going to keep coming."

Again and again Johnson analogized the Vietnam challenge to the problem Mexico posed for the early Texas settlers. Sixty years after his father sponsored the Alamo Purchase Bill, Johnson told the National Security Council, "Hell, Vietnam is just like the Alamo. Hell, it's just like . . . you were surrounded and you damn well needed somebody. Well, by God, I'm going to go—and I thank the Lord that I've got men who want to go with me, from McNamara right on down to the littlest private who's carrying a gun."

In 1968 dissatisfaction with LBJ's feckless policies in Vietnam drove him from office, but it was the backlash in the South against his racial program that ended the party's hold on the White House. Congressman F. Edward Hebert recalled, "In Louisiana he was absolutely hated because they considered him a turncoat. They considered Lyndon Johnson the most horrible man that ever lived." In the November election the Democratic presidential candidate, Hubert Humphrey, paid the price for Johnson's advocacy of civil-rights laws when he lost every southern state save Texas. So thoroughly did the reaction against Johnson's championing of equality rewrite the nation's electoral maps that for the next quarter of a century, Democratic presidential candidates received fewer than one out of three white ballots cast in the South.

"A Disdain for the South"

HIS GREAT COALITION OF 1964 IN SHAMBLES, HIS policies objects of derision, Johnson said goodbye to the national capital, which had been his main domicile for nearly four decades, to spend his final days at his ranch home "down at the Pedernales where my grandfather and grandmother and mother and father and uncles and cousins and aunts are all buried on the banks of that little river." There he brooded over what his tenure as President had signified. He wondered whether, despite the example he had set as a leader who put nation over section, the North would ever get over "a disdain for the South that seems to be woven into the fabric of Northern experience."

Johnson found it even harder to understand how any of his onetime comrades on Capitol Hill could think he was an enemy of the South. No matter how much he might on occasion conceive of himself as a westerner or a longtime resident of Washington, he always believed that when he recommended programs that affected the South, he did so with the instincts of a native. "I know the burdens that the South has borne," he declared. "I know the troubles that the South has seen. I know the ordeals that have tried the South through all of these years. And I want to see those burdens lifted off the South. I want the ordeals to end and the South to stand where it should stand as the full and honored part of a proud and united land."

Southern particularism on race, Johnson had long ago concluded, exacted too high a cost. Quite apart from the pain it inflicted on blacks, to which he was not insensitive, racism was an indulgence southern whites could not afford if they expected to thrive in the second half of the twentieth century. When he broke the eighty-three-day filibuster in 1964, one historian asserted, Johnson "removed the stigma of being a southerner." Another has said that "he helped the South to join the United States." Virginia Durr, an Alabama woman who knew what courage it could require to defy the racial mores of her section, concluded, "Lincoln struck the shackles off the slaves, but Lyndon struck the shackles off the South. He freed us from the burden of segregation."

Lyndon Johnson, though, went to his grave knowing that to millions of Americans he was a pariah. Many in the North still viewed his southern manner as alien. Many in the South still perceived him as a traitor. It is hard to imagine what more any leader could have done to reconcile section and nation. But it proved not to have been enough for what the historian T. Harry Williams called "this tormented man from his tormented region who had such large visions of what his country might become." □

A Short Story



Nights Can Turn Cool in Viborra

by Charles Portis

“WHAT WERE THOSE dull bonks I heard this morning?”

Jason and Mopsy had just come down to breakfast, and I threw up my hands in mock dismay as she put that old, old question to me.

“Why, Mopsy, don’t tell me you haven’t read my travel articles! Shame on you! Those were the famous thudding church bells of Viborra! *‘Thunk, thunk, thunk,’* they say. ‘Welcome, Mopsy! Welcome to Viborra!’”

The poor girl went pink and the dining hall of the Pan-Lupus Hotel erupted into good-natured laughter. The diners laughed and the waiters laughed and so did Ugo, the jolly old elf at the buffet table, who was sprinkling a bit of this and a bit of that into his tangy and oh so scrumptious herring paste—a Viborran delight called *huegma*.

Nonresonant church bells? Freshly pounded *huegma* smeared on warm buns straight from the oven? Romantic moonlight rides in circular boats not much bigger than tubs? The gaiety of an open-air market with unfamiliar vegetables on display—so knobby and streaky? Narrow cobbled streets? Bargain belts—and purses too? Great fun at breakfast?

Well, yes, and these are just a few of the joys awaiting the traveler who finds his way to this lovely old colonial city nestled in a sapphire cove under a cerulean sky on the Sea of Tessa—known locally as Da Magro, or “the Burning Sea.”

We had arrived the night before on a high-wing Tess-air Fokker—I and my new chums, Jason and Mopsy Crimm. With my port-of-entry know-how I soon had us cleared through customs—a painless business on the whole. The Crimms were dazzled by my moves as I pushed in ahead of others, jumping this line and that one. With a wave and a knowing wink I steered them quickly through all the control points. There was one awkward

“How lucky the Crimms are to have scraped acquaintance with me,” thought prizewinning travel writer Chick Jardine, “for I seldom reveal my identity to ordinary people”

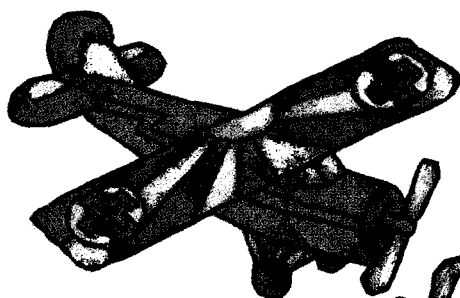
moment, when the Propriety Officer caught sight of Jason’s hideous jogging shoes. But then the officer—doing a priceless double-take—recognized my distinctive turquoise velveteen smoking jacket (so loose and comfy on long flights), and the poor

man was all but speechless.

“Chick Jardine!” he sputtered. “Winner of five gold Doobie Awards for travel writing! How I envy your powers of description, sir!”

After that, as you can imagine, the city was ours.

This brings me, however, to my one teeny caveat for you folks planning your first trip to Viborra. Be advised that the Ministry of Fitness and Propriety maintains a Vigi-



lance Desk at the airport. If the duty officer there perceives you to be a lout, rich or poor, he will assign you to the Morono Palace, a magnificent hotel for louts on the eastern beach, or mud flats, just across the Bal River from Viborra proper, regardless of any previous arrangement you have made. As a registered lout (stamped thus on your visa in luminescent orange ink—LOUT), you will be somewhat restricted in your movements, to the eastern beach and to the markets, bars, and shops around the Arch of Nimmo, or the Plaza of Louts. You will also be fitted with and made to wear an orange plastic wristband for ready identification.

But not to worry. The guests at the Morono Palace have loads of fun in their own way, and prices are considerably cheaper in that district—particularly on belts, yo-yos, fishnet tank tops, heavy woolen shower curtains, and tortoise-shell flashlights. You can even watch these unique torches being made in ancient workshops, where the delicate craft of shell-routing is jealously guarded and passed on from father to son. And the central dining hall

at the Morono is a show in itself, with its famous rude waiters cavorting comically about in striped jerseys as they insult the guests, and with its Morono Mega-Spread, a free-for-all salad bar 188 feet long. Then, blazing and blaring atop the Palace, there is the legendary Club Nimmo, reputed to be the world's loudest nightclub, with music and hilarity and flashing lights twenty-four hours a day.

"No, no," I said to Mopsy, as I caught her making a move toward the bud vase on our breakfast table. "Smell, but don't touch. That delicate white blossom is not so innocent as it appears. That, my dear, is an *artu* flower from the volcanic highlands, and it exudes a toxic alkaline resin that can blister the fingers. A defense mechanism, you see."

It was all coming back to me, remarkably enough—a torrent of Viborran memories and lore, on this, my first visit to the old city in many years. I thought how lucky the Crimms were to have scraped acquaintance with me, for I seldom reveal my identity to ordinary people on my



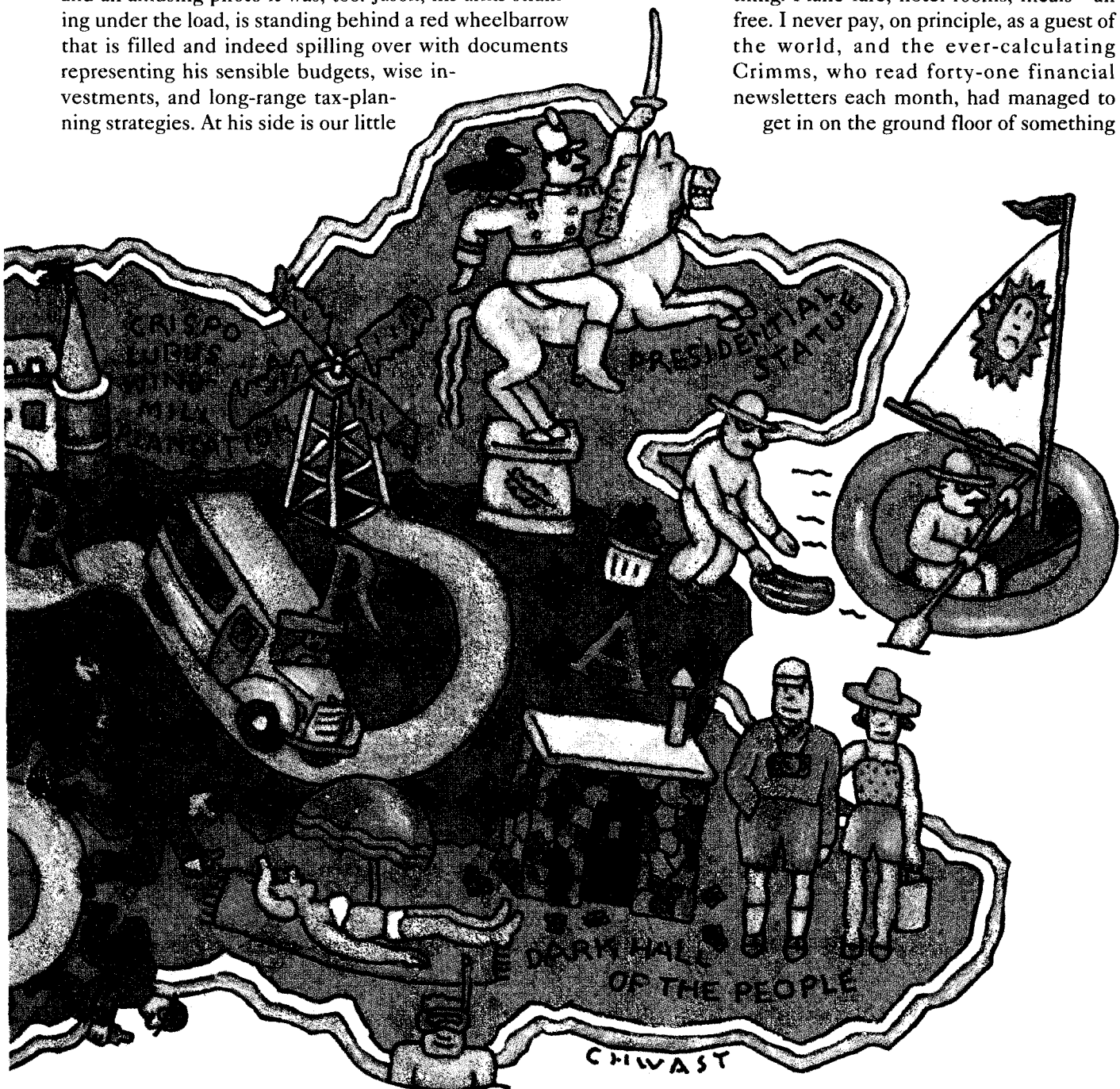
jaunts around the world, knowing and hating the fuss that always follows. My helpful tips to less experienced travelers are strictly confined to my prizewinning magazine articles and my widely syndicated newspaper column, and when I hear star-struck people murmuring around me (they having spotted my trademark turquoise jacket), I go all deaf and ignorant.

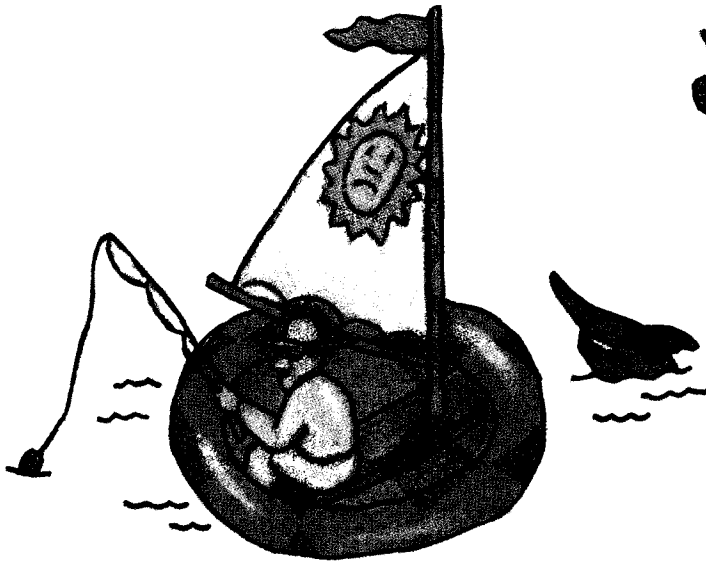
But then, how natural it is that celebrities should gravitate to one another. In our chat on the Fokker it came out that Jason and Mopsy, far from being ordinary, had appeared on the covers of nine popular financial magazines in the past year, posed in front of their restored Victorian house, with expensive new silvery cars parked in the driveway. Mopsy showed me the most recent cover, and an amusing photo it was, too. Jason, his arms straining under the load, is standing behind a red wheelbarrow that is filled and indeed spilling over with documents representing his sensible budgets, wise investments, and long-range tax-planning strategies. At his side is our little

gamine, Mopsy, with a sheaf of CDs and tax-free municipal bonds spread fanwise and peeping out ever so coyly from her bodice. She confided to me, with pardonable pride, that of all the grinning young couples ever to appear on the covers of these magazines in front of their restored Victorian houses, she and Jason were judged to have the least-blemished shutters and the most beautifully complacent grins.

People who matter, then, people worth knowing, and the feeling was mutual, to put it mildly. Can you picture the scene at the airport when the officer spilled the beans—that I was award-winning syndicated columnist Chick Jardine? The Crimms were addled with delight!

It also turned out that none of us was paying for anything. Plane fare, hotel rooms, meals—all free. I never pay, on principle, as a guest of the world, and the ever-calculating Crimms, who read forty-one financial newsletters each month, had managed to get in on the ground floor of something





called the Ponzi Travelbirds, through which society, as Early Birds, they will enjoy free travel for life, at the expense of all Late Birds joining the club. Need I say it? My kind of folks!

AFTER BREAKFAST WE WERE OFF FOR A DAY OF adventure under the azure vault of the sky, with yours truly acting as cicerone. We clambered up the winding stone staircase to the topmost battlement of the old fortress known as the Castle of Abomination. We made our way down narrow cobbled streets to the Thieves' Market, and we took a bus ride to the Crispo Lupus Windmill Plantation. There is little to see on that barren hilltop—a tangle of copper wire and seven or eight rusting steel towers with broken windmill sails. Not one watt of electricity was ever generated by the project. But I knew this little excursion would be a treat for the Crimms. Back home they could entertain their friends with the story of how they had ridden on a ramshackle bus in a tropical country—with *pigs and chickens aboard!*

We inspected the bushes at the National Arboretum, running mostly to prickly, grayish xerophytic scrub. We toured the Arses Lupus Mask and Wig Factory downtown. We admired the slavering ferocity of the women gnawing on leather (to soften it) at the Arses Lupus Belt and Purse Co-op. We descended (watch your head!) into the dark, dripping dungeons of Melanoma Prison, now a horror museum complete with shackled skeletons artfully laid out on straw. In the lower, blacker depths of that infamous hole you will need a candle, on sale at the reception desk for fifty pilmiras. Luckily, I had my own penlight, and the alert Crimms neatly got around the fee by exchanging some little foil-wrapped bricklets of butter (lifted from the hotel buffet) for their candles.

Then once again out into the shimmering light of day,



and under a sky of that heartbreaking shade of delft blue you will find nowhere else in the world, we took a pleasant stroll along the bayfront promenade. We ate flavored ices and watched the children clubbing ratfish in the shallows.

Jason was fascinated by the Viborran coins, light as fine pastry. (Even the money is fun in Viborra!) I explained that they are minted from a curious alloy of chalk and aluminum, or actually baked, on greased sheets, in government kilns, and that, unlike all other coins in the world, they float. The 500-pilmira pieces are particularly buoyant, and these huge gray discs are used to stuff life jackets.

Pilmira coins have a dusty surface somewhat like that of a butterfly's wing. This creepy feeling or quality of dry slipperiness is held in great esteem by Viborrans, and they have a word for it—*rhampa*, which translates not only as "free of asperities" but also as "charm," "magic," "felicity," "a leap of the heart," "brutal cunning," "inner certitude," or "a sudden white spikiness, as of a yawning cat's mouth," according to context. If you wish to say "Thank you" or "Is it not so?" or "Beat it!" or "The bill, please," you can never go far wrong with the all-purpose phrase "*Ar rhampa palayot*," delivered with a servile bob of the head.

"Our free tub ride!" Mopsy cried out, as she looked at her watch. "It's almost noon! Are we far from the tub docks?"

Not far, I assured her, and cautioned her against using such derisory terms as "tub" and "bucket" around the fishermen. These proud fellows do not laugh at jokes about their small leather coracles—called *moas*. Mopsy had her coupon ready. Through clever booking—all their trips are planned in detail a year in advance—the Crimms had received from Tessair a free bottle of skin lotion and a book of valuable coupons, one of which entitled them to a free *moa* ride in Viborra Bay on any weekday before noon, between April 20 and December 5.

Hearty singing told us that the fishing fleet was coming in—and with a good catch! The little round vessels, painted in soft pastel colors and decorated with painted human eyes, gyrated and jostled against one another like bumper cars at the fair as the men struggled to bring them in against the current. Steering a *moa*, or indeed making it go at all, in a particular direction is a difficult art to master.

And noon is not, perhaps, the best time of day to take a *moa* out into the Burning Sea. The sun at meridian is a fearful thing in Viborra. We paddled frantically and our goatskin craft kept spinning around and around in place. There was no breeze. Stinging sweat blurred our vision. (But nights can turn cool in Viborra, so be sure to pack a sweater or light wrap.) Still, you must make the effort, because the only proper way to see the Melanoma Memorial is from the sea.

THE [REDACTED] OF CHRISTMAS, 1715.

Hearts warm and
spirits bright, they bore
but three gifts on
that cold winter night.
A grand, golden swan.
A small, silver bell.
And the world's finest
cognac: Martell.

MARTELL



SINCE 1715.

COGNAC. L'ART DE M [REDACTED] ELL.

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UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM

They offer counsel and comment on the week's events from Washington. They do it with wit and dissension. They're The McLaughlin Group.

The Group comprises (clockwise from left) Jack Germond, Clarence Page, John McLaughlin, Eleanor Clift, Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes.

They're contentious and contagious. So, tune in to The McLaughlin Group.

Made possible by a grant from GE.

The McLaughlin Group

Check your local listing for station and time.



We bring good things to life.

This is a colossal equestrian statue of the late President Eutropio Melanoma, rising up against a cobalt sky at the end of a long mole, or breakwater. Fabricated of ferro-concrete on site, and standing as high as a nine-story building, it commemorates the long rule (more than forty years) of the beloved old President. It is a robust, lumpy work (what one art critic has called "the apotheosis of portland cement"), and a grand tribute to the man's political genius and "The Year of the Edict"—1949—which is sometimes called "The Year of Decision." The horse is rearing up in a fine capriole, and the presidential sword (giver of victory) is pointed out to sea. A black rubber raven (bird of prophecy) is perched on his shoulder.

The old President was elected over and over again by acclamation and is still fondly remembered here for his disheveled hair and clothing, for his dramatic and alternating acts of mercy and cruelty, and for the mischievous teasing of his ministers, some of whom he made give their reports while running alongside his moving Packard, with the window glass only partly rolled down. He also undertook to teach lawyers humility, giving his Supreme Court justices the choice of working for three months of the year in the nitrate mines or serving for three months on road-repair crews, wearing red vests and flagging traffic.

At the Café Tessa, a waterfront bar where dissident jugglers and poets meet to grumble and conspire, you will hear that it was the old man's simple tastes in food and his modest pleasures that most endeared him to his people. One of his favorite amusements was to prowl stealthily about the grounds of the presidential mansion with a garden hose, squirting water on cats and servants, and taking gopher colonies by surprise with sudden inundations of their little underground apartments. At night, after a light supper of a single warmed-over bean cake, he liked to retire to the ballroom for an hour or so of running his fist up and down the white keys of a piano.

Something of a prodigy, Melanoma consolidated his power early on, as quite a young man, by disposing of all likely claimants to the office of chief executive. His father and his infant sons he garroted personally. With his brothers, uncles, and nephews, for whom he felt less natural affection, he was more severe, condemning each of them to a protracted, popeyed death in leather harness, dragging ore carts out of the nitrate pits. But he had overlooked someone in his planning, and so the Melanoma era came to an appalling, not to say sizzling, end in 1979, when his only legitimate daughter, Arses Melanoma Lupus, plunged a white-hot poker into the sunken belly of the ascetic old man. The puncture was mortal. Arses's husband, Crispo Lupus, then succeeded to the presidency, after a brief scuffle with guards on the veranda of the mansion.

Elderly firebrand poets at the Café Tessa, whose subsidies were sharply cut back by the new administration, will tell you that Crispo Lupus lacks *rhampa* and a masterly hand; that he neglects his duties; that he is not a

man of bold strokes, of deeds you could sing. They say he does nothing but fool about with his hunting birds, leaving the much feared Arses in full and very active command at the mansion. Under the Lupus regime, the poets say, the people of Viborra have actually become shorter and uglier, and everybody's hair has gone all gummy. Whatever the truth of the matter, it is certain that Lupus has never captured the hearts of his countrymen in the way that Melanoma did with his Edict of 1949, by which decree the listings in the telephone directory were alphabetized.

ANYONE CAN DIRECT YOU TO THE CAFÉ TESSA, which is situated near the base of the natural rock pinnacle known as the Needle of Desolation, and just around the corner from another downtown landmark, the Arses Lupus Black Pavilion, or the Dark Hall of the People. This very modern structure, with lots and lots of darkish glass, is something of a barren shaft itself, rising up in bleak splendor under the gentian bowl of the sky. The thing fairly takes your breath away, and in Chick Jardine's humble opinion there is nothing in New York to touch it for sharp angularity of line and blankness of aspect.

It is here, in the spacious atrium of the Hall, that Carnival season begins each year with the auction of public offices and preferments. Nimmo Lupus, the playboy son of Crispo and the imperious Arses, presides over the bidding in the red silk robes of Grand Chamberlain, to which is affixed the golden sunburst badge of Inspector of Libraries. He is usually accompanied on these state occasions by his youngest son, Bungo Lupus, a cute toddler, who, all decked out in a little policeman's uniform, sits dozing on his father's knee. One frequent bidder told me that he took the limp Bungo at first for a dummy! The poets say that Bungo has the same weak eyes as Nimmo.

So—Carnival in Viborra. Should you go? Yes, but be prepared for something a little different. The revels in Viborra proper are nothing at all like those in Rio and New Orleans. There are no gala parades or balls. The people simply go out at night wearing dog masks or dog helmets and mill about in darkness and eerie silence. They take measured steps and move in slow tidal fashion up and down the narrow cobbled streets. Now and then they stop and look at one another, nose to nose, without speaking, rather like dogs, for some little time. And when the shuffling stops—such stillness! The ceremony, it seems, is not an ancient one, but I have been unable to find out when or how it started, or just what the point of it is. The Long March of the Dogs, they call it, though there is no canine friskiness about the thing; it is really more like a shambling procession of cattle. Bring comfortable walking shoes. Leave your dog helmets and dog masks at home, as they will only be confiscated at the airport. Only those made in Viborra (with longish snouts)

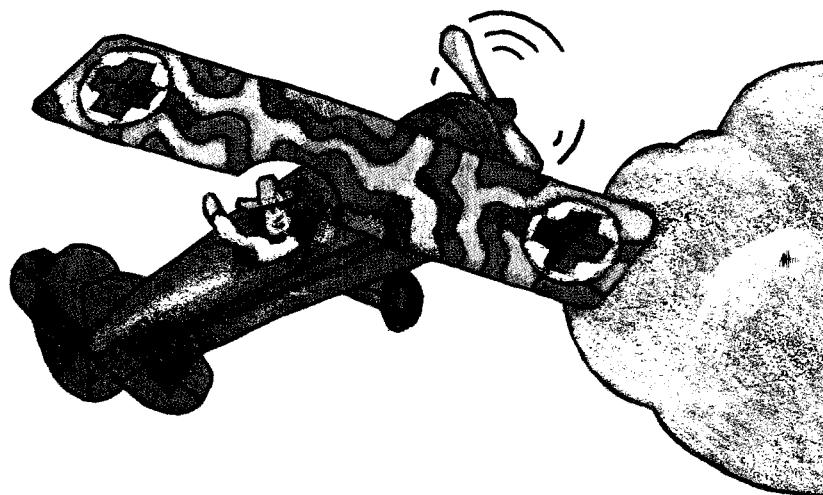
and certified by the Central Committee can be worn in the March.

Things are livelier, of course, across the Bal in transpontine Viborra, where, every night at midnight, there is the celebrated Stampede of the Drunks, around and around the Plaza of Louts. It is not for everyone, this stumbling, boisterous race, but to say you have run with the international drunks on the River Bal—well, take it straight from Chick Jardine, few travel claims confer more prestige these days. Your application for the Stampede of the Drunks, with passport-grade photo and \$200 entry fee, must be made to the Central Committee six months in advance.

All other events are open to the public. Everyone (with orange bracelet) can join in the frolic around the fountain and in the reflecting pool and along the narrow cobbled streets radiating out from the Nimmo Arch. Wear casual clothes. Beware the melon ambush. Take care when rounding corners or you are likely to have a watermelon or some rotten and unfamiliar vegetable smashed down on your head—with what seems to me unnecessary force. Stay well clear of those roving gangs of hooded urchins who call themselves the Red Ants; they will seize you and gag you and truss you up and scrawl Red Ant slogans across your belly and then toss you about on a stretched bull hide. Keep a sharp lookout for boulders and burning tires rolling down the hillside streets. There is a certain amount of capering around bonfires. After the first night the streets are littered with putrefying vegetable fragments. There are one or two deaths each night and a good deal of broken glass.

In recent years the season has been spoiled a bit by nightly typhoons, which are sometimes followed by pre-dawn tsunamis. The poets claim that something has gone wrong with the prevailing winds, and they blame the unholy Arses and her practices in necromancy. Despite this, the merrymakers still come in swarms, and I must caution you that there is a lot of shameless overbooking in Viborra during Carnival. You may be forced to double up in your hotel room with unsavory strangers, and sleep in shifts. "Hot bunking," as we call it in the trade. Three years ago, I am informed, the Morono Palace was so jam-packed with louts that the hotel itself subsided eight and a half inches into the mud.

Poor Mopsy was ready to drop. It was just after one in the morning and we were weary and stuffed. We were fairly waterlogged with oysters. But we still had a gratis supper coming, and the dining hall at the Pan-Lupus didn't open until 2:00 A.M. (Note well: It is not fashionable to sup in Viborra before about 2:30 A.M. This by way of showing you do not have to rise early.)



What to do? Fighting off sleep, and determined not to be done out of any meal that was due us, we gave each other playful slaps and dashed cold water in our faces. We went to the bar to kill some time and found it filled with English travel writers in suede shoes and speckled green suits. What a scene! They were laughing and scribbling and asking how to spell "ogive" and brazenly cribbing long passages of architectural arcana from their John Ruskin handbooks, which are issued with their union cards.

"Look, that sod Jardine is here too!" one of them shouted. Then he and the others came crowding around, seething with bitter envy of me and my *Chick's Wheel of Adjectives*, a handy rotating cardboard device, which, at \$24.95, was such a super hit with the travel journalists at our winter conference in Macao. Mopsy feared for my safety as the chaps bumped up against me and heaped childish ridicule on my cluster of lapel pins, tokens of numerous professional honors. A serene and scornful smile soon sent them reeling back in confusion.

We left them there, stewing in resentment and muttering over their pink gins, and at two on the dot we were standing first in line outside the dining-hall doors. From campaniles all over town the bells of Viborra were striking the hour, with paired thuds and thumps of slightly different pitch. I was explaining how these strange dead bells are cast from a curious alloy of pumice and zinc when Mopsy silenced me with a raised hand.

"No—listen," she said. "Those—bells. They seem somehow to know we're off tomorrow on the morning Fokker. They seem to be—saying something."

"But I don't understand," said Jason. "How do you mean, Mopsy? Just what is it they—seem to say?"

"Those—sounds on the wind. Can't you hear? 'Come back!' they seem to say. 'Come back, Mopsy! Come back, Jason! Come back, Chick! Come back to the sparkling shores of the Burning Sea! Come back in time to a more gracious and all but forgotten way of life in the enchanting old city of Viborra nestled snugly in a sapphire cove 'neath the vast rotunda of an indigo sky!'" □

**Angela Mina survived
poverty, an earthquake,
and a revolution with a little
help from a friend...**



...2200 miles away.

Childreach Sponsorship.

El Salvador is a beautiful but poor country. Little children do not fare well there. 61 out of every 100 born die before their first birthday. Over 75% of all children suffer some form of malnutrition.

ANGELA IS ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES.

In 1976, when Angela was almost three, Childreach (then known as Foster Parents Plan) found her a sponsor in the United States – Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Rainville of Warwick, Rhode Island. Angela lived in a mud and cane house with a floor of damp packed earth. She suffered from bronchitis but was generally in good health.

Over the years, through a consistent flow of field reports, 60 personal letters from Angela and her family, a scrapbook full of pictures, holiday greetings, and many warm memories – and some frightening moments – the Rainvilles found a lasting friendship with a child, a family, and an entire community.

CHILDREACH MADE IT POSSIBLE. PLAN INTERNATIONAL MADE IT HAPPEN.



"I am attending kindergarten and I feel happy because I like the songs they teach me." March, 1978

In the poorest countries overseas, relatively small amounts of American money properly used can virtually perform miracles. Childreach raises that money by finding sponsors who wish to invest modest amounts of money each month in the future of a needy child, family, and community overseas. Childreach is the U.S. affiliate of PLAN International – the largest non-governmental, non-sectarian helping organization in the world. PLAN International also has sponsor-gathering affiliates in seven

other countries.

For over 55 years, *PLAN International has been in the field bringing its life-changing skills to communities throughout the world.*



Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Rainville in 1976.

Currently, PLAN International is working to bring programs in health, education, community development and income-producing skills to 100 developing communities in Asia, Africa, South America and Central America.

To understand how Childreach and PLAN International impacted Angela's life, consider the things that *didn't* happen to her.

SHE NEVER BECAME ILL WITH AMOEBIC OR BACILLARY DYSENTERY.

Only a little more than half of the country has access to clean water. Using funds pooled from sponsorship money in the region, PLAN International's field staff typically aids communities like Angela's with equipment and expertise so that the people can create their own clean water supply. Since many of the staff are selected from people who come from the village or town being helped, there is a high level of sensitivity to the specific needs of the locale.

SHE NEVER DEVELOPED PNEUMONIA.

Medicines and health care made possible by PLAN International in clinics supported by sponsor



"My brother Otto turned a year older and we made him a party." November, 1982

It works small miracles.

contributions kept Angela's bronchitis from escalating into a more serious bronchial ailment.

SHE NEVER HAD TO LEAVE SCHOOL.

Despite severe poverty, Angela did not have to give up her schooling to go to work. Her Childreach sponsor's continuing support made it possible for PLAN International to supply school uniforms and pay school fees that would have been impossible for Angela's father to afford.

THE FAMILY NEVER BROKE UP, NEVER STOPPED TRYING TO BETTER ITSELF.

Even though Angela's mother left when she was still a little girl, Angela's father, a wall painter, was able to keep his family together during very hard times because of the support given to the community in general and his family in specific by the PLAN International staff.

PLAN International, fearing the poor condition of Angela's home might lead to health problems, helped the father repair the walls, windows and floors. They even supplied some basic furniture.

BECAUSE OF WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN, HERE'S WHAT DID HAPPEN.

Angela became an excellent student, having finished high school with high marks. She is now eighteen, and has also graduated from the Childreach sponsorship program. With assistance she had received from her Childreach sponsor, she is

learning to type and take dictation. Her bronchitis no longer threatens her and she is a happy, healthy young woman.

Her father continues to increase his wages as a wall painter. Her older brother is working, and her younger brother is in school and doing well.

There has been a revolution in progress in El Salvador since 1980. Unfortunately some sponsored children were hurt or killed – along with many PLAN International field staff. An earthquake badly shook El Salvador in 1987 but Angela and her family escaped injury.

Through the civil unrest and the natural disaster, through the sickness and the poverty, Angela believed she and her family would survive and have a better life. Her faith in her religion and her family, her friends at PLAN International, and a relationship forged over 15½ years with a family thousands of miles away has given her the hope and confidence that her dreams for tomorrow *will* come true.


childreach

The U.S. Affiliate of PLAN INTERNATIONAL

It works small miracles.



"Thank God we didn't have any personal injuries from the earthquake." June, 1987

"...I plan to take a course in shorthand and typing. I greet you with love." July, 1991

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF A CHILD'S DREAMS?



Mr. & Mrs. Rainville today.

Dear Future Sponsors,

I have had the privilege for over 15 years to be part of the odyssey of a little girl and her family as they battled poverty and grew healthy, strong and happy despite overwhelming odds.

I remember the day I received the first letter from Angela written in her own hand. It said that she was doing well and that she was "first in her class." I was incredibly touched. There is really no way to explain that kind of joy. It is unique. You feel part of something very important, part of a child's life.

Independence is vital to any child. But when she is able to start to control the world around her, to make the decisions that will ultimately help her and her family out of poverty, it is a monumental accomplishment. There are few things my husband and I have done in our lives that give us as much pride as helping, in some small way, Angela and her family achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

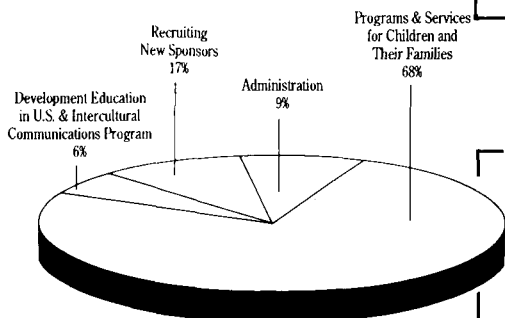
How does it feel to be part of Angela's dreams? It feels great!

Childreach works. That's why we are now sponsoring another child. That's why you should become a Childreach sponsor too.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Raymond Rainville

Childreach Fiscal Year 1992 Expenditures



Total Administration & Fund Raising - 26%
Total Program Services - 74%

Please look for Childreach in the "Wise Giving Guide" of the National Charities Information Bureau (NCIB), where Childreach is listed regularly for meeting the highest standards of philanthropy.

PLAN International has consultative status with UNICEF and is officially recognized by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.



The U.S. Affiliate of  PLAN INTERNATIONAL

It works small miracles.

For only \$22 a month, just 72¢ a day, you can become a Childreach sponsor. Please fill out the coupon below and start to make a difference in the life of a child who needs your help.

N317

YES, I WANT TO GIVE A LITTLE BOY OR GIRL A CHANCE FOR A BETTER LIFE!

Please enroll me as a Childreach Sponsor for:

☐ A Boy ☐ A Girl ☐ Either ☐ The child who has been waiting the longest.
Age: ☐ 3-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-11 ☐ 12-14 ☐ Any Age

I'd like my child to be from:

☐ SOUTH AMERICA: ☐ Colombia ☐ Ecuador ☐ Bolivia
☐ CENTRAL AMERICA/CARIBBEAN: ☐ Guatemala ☐ Honduras ☐ El Salvador
☐ Dominican Republic
☐ ASIA: ☐ Indonesia ☐ India ☐ Nepal ☐ Philippines ☐ Thailand
☐ AFRICA: ☐ Burkina Faso ☐ Egypt ☐ Togo ☐ Guinea

☐ Please send my New Sponsor Kit with my sponsored child's photo and case history.

☐ My check for \$22 for the first month's sponsorship is enclosed.

☐ MAYBE. I'm interested in Childreach, but I'll need to know more before I make my decision. Please send me information on the child I'll be sponsoring.

☐ Although I can't sponsor right now, I'd like to contribute \$_____ to your Emergency Fund.

☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss ☐ Ms.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

HOME PHONE

Mail to: Childreach
155 Plan Way
Warwick, RI 02886-1099

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To judge by the example of Canada, which began an experiment in free trade with the United States in 1989, the proposed U.S. free-trade agreement with Mexico is a threat to the social comity on which prosperity depends

WHAT PRICE ECONOMIC GROWTH?

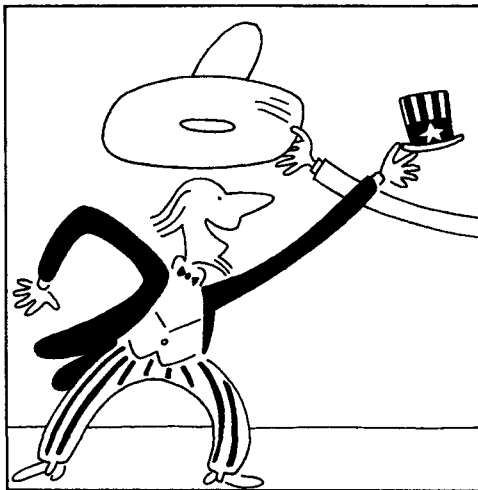
BY JONATHAN SCHLEFER

"FREE TRADE" IS SHORT-hand for both an ideology and a theory of the way things are supposed to work out for the best between trading partners. If the United States goes ahead with the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada, it will be betting a great deal on that theory. Proponents of the agreement argue that it will bring economic growth to all three countries. Opponents say that it will erode support for social-welfare programs and aggravate inequality, especially in the United States, where the gap between rich and poor has been widening ominously in recent years. Both sides could be right. I will argue that the agreement confronts us with the question posed in my title.

Before elaborating that argument, I want briefly to review the history of the free-trade agreement. The current pursuit of this grand abstract idea has roots in the domestic politics of our North American neighbors, Mexico and Canada. Indeed, when one considers it in the context of its gestation, there is an asymmetry about NAFTA—as if our neighbors figured out that to get us to help them politically, all they had to do was invoke the right Republican ideological shibboleths. In that sense NAFTA is a belated monument to Reaganism.

It was not the United States but Canada that proposed the free-trade agreement that has been in effect between the two nations since 1989, and it was Mexico that pressed for the negotiations that may well lead to the North American Free Trade Agreement among all three countries. Despite the vast differences between Canada and Mexico, their governments' motivations were remarkably similar—and illuminating about hoped-for changes in the continent's economy.

In Canada, the Liberal Pierre Trudeau, as Prime Minister, had followed a century-long tradition of what was seen as national industrial policy. The government protected



many industries with tariffs three times as high as those in the United States, approved only foreign investment that it deemed of "significant benefit" to Canada, and often imposed requirements on foreign firms such as that a given proportion of purchases were to be made locally and that a given percentage of production was to be exported. The Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney came to power in 1984 convinced that Canada, with a manufacturing productivity frequently reckoned to be 25 percent lower than that of the United States,

needed a dose of the free market. The Macdonald Royal Commission, convened to examine the economy, predictably concluded in 1985 that "we Canadians must significantly increase our reliance on market forces." What was innovative was the means it suggested: "free trade is the main instrument" the government should use to achieve this "fundamental change in the relationship of the state to the market." Some weeks later Mulroney proposed the free-trade agreement to President Ronald Reagan. Gilbert Winham, the research coordinator for the commission, said, "In terms of its more profound interests, what Canada wants from the bilateral negotiation, it could achieve unilaterally." The FTA not only is eliminating tariffs over ten years but has codified much of Mulroney's deregulation—for example, precluding a return to investment policies like those of the Trudeau government.

Mexico's economic history makes the Trudeau government look like the Eisenhower Administration. As late as the mid-1980s Mexico maintained tariffs of up to 100 percent, flat prohibitions on foreign investment in areas from basic chemicals to stock brokerage, intrusive rules for approved foreign firms, and state ownership of the oil company, banking, and many other enterprises. The economy grew more than six percent a year for decades—twice the U.S. rate—but in the late 1970s Mexico borrowed heavily just before interest rates soared, counted on oil revenues just before prices dropped, and wound up with its famous

debt. Partly as a condition for receiving temporary loans from the International Monetary Fund, but finally because they, too, favored a dose of the free market, Presidents Miguel de la Madrid and Carlos Salinas de Gortari brought to an end the history of state economic intervention. After changing the rules in 1989 so as to welcome foreign investment, Salinas waited for the influx. But, as was made clear in an October, 1990, study by the U.S. International Trade Commission, investors feared that what Salinas did, his successors could undo. Like Mulroney, then, Salinas proposed a free-trade agreement with the United States to secure domestic deregulation through an international treaty. Canada subsequently joined the negotiations, so that NAFTA will apply to the whole continent north of Belize and Guatemala.

The Motives Behind NAFTA

THE REAGAN AND BUSH ADMINISTRATIONS agreed to trade negotiations not only to help like-minded foreign governments but also for their own reasons. Global talks under the aegis of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade remained stalled through the 1980s. GATT has done one thing well—reducing tariffs on manufactured goods among advanced nations—and seems unable to do more. It has done little to facilitate foreign investment or control nationalist policies in countries ranging from Japan to Trudeau's Canada, and it has not paved the way for firms to provide services abroad such as banking and data processing. The Reagan and Bush Administrations concluded that the United States needs progress in these areas to exploit its competitive strengths. With GATT stalled and trade blocs emerging in Europe and East Asia, the U.S. response was to try to develop a North American bloc. In a 1988 article about the free-trade agreement with Canada, James Baker, then Secretary of the Treasury, wrote, "Other nations are forced to recognize that the United States will devise ways to expand trade—with or without them." In the article Baker used the phrase "to expand trade" interchangeably with "to open markets." He wanted the terms of the treaty to reflect the same free-market policies that Canada sought.

NAFTA entails a similar bargain. It will both promote the free flow of goods by eliminating tariffs over five to ten years (fifteen for a few sensitive items) and establish rules to foster the flow of investment across borders, and it seeks broadly to increase North American reliance on market forces. All three governments, along with most economists and many business groups, share a conviction that this will strengthen the North American economies, largely by making manufacturing, financial firms, and some other services more efficient. Investors will be able to locate enterprises wherever they can operate most effectively—for example, developing advanced software in the United States and producing personal computers with less expensive labor in Mexico. Production can be

planned on a broader scale, for the entire North American market, rather than in the piecemeal fashion of today, for particular countries with the hope of export. Products will become both cheaper for North American consumers and more competitive in world markets, according to Rudiger Dornbusch, of MIT, and other economists. These economists foresee few drawbacks to NAFTA.

The question is whether they are right. NAFTA is an experiment in opening the economies of industrialized nations to a major Third World country. Japan has no such agreement with its East Asian trading partners, and although the European Community admitted Spain, Portugal, and Greece into its membership, they are not comparable to Mexico. Spain has a per capita income close to half that of the United States, while Mexico's is a tenth as high. Portugal and Greece are poorer than Spain but still have per capita incomes twice Mexico's, and they contain only six percent of the total population of the EC; Mexico contains almost a quarter of North America's population. The EC is bringing poorer member countries up to Community standards with billions of dollars of development assistance and the enforcement of common environmental and workplace regulations. The EC economic and political union, if it occurs, will make policies on matters from unemployment assistance to maternity leave at least as consistent as are those of, say, Massachusetts and Alabama today. In contrast, NAFTA proposes that the United States and Canada take Mexico as is, while Mexico pays back a debt of close to \$75 billion—a kind of Marshall Plan in reverse. The treaty specifically allows each nation to establish its own environmental and workplace regulations. It is an experiment tried in economics texts but never before in history.

Consider Canada

THE CANADIAN DEBATE OVER THE 1989 FREE-trade agreement is useful to consider: it set the tone for current NAFTA disputes, and the few years since the agreement was adopted tell something about its effects, and thus what NAFTA's could be. The main issue in the 1988 Canadian elections, the agreement was supported by the Conservatives but opposed by the Liberals and the New Democratic Party—along with the Canadian Labor Congress, the Canadian Teachers Federation, the Canadian Nurses Federation, the Conference of Catholic Bishops, women's groups, anti-poverty organizations, environmental groups, and, as Ernie Lightman and Allan Irving, professors of social work at the University of Toronto, put it, "virtually every non-business interest group in the country." In the end the New Democratic Party and the Liberals split the opposition vote, and the Conservatives, with a plurality of 42 percent, won a majority in the House of Commons. The agreement was ratified, but Canadians, particularly lower-income Canadians, have remained broadly opposed to it in polls.

The concerns of Canadian critics center on erosion of the welfare state, which is much more generous in Canada than in the United States. For example, in Canada both health care and Old Age Security are universal—eligibility for the latter, unlike U.S. Social Security, is based not on work history but on age alone. The differences between Canadian and U.S. unemployment insurance are staggering. In 1988 seventy percent of unemployed Canadians received insurance covering 60 percent of their wages, while 32 percent of Americans received benefits covering 35 percent of their wages. In other words, nearly 70 percent in the United States got nothing. In both countries unions push for broad social programs (which reduce unemployed workers' incentive to break strikes), but Canadian unions represent 36 percent of employed workers (outside agriculture), while U.S. unions represent 18 percent. The whole attitude toward unions is different. *Canada Year Book 1992*, a more colorful if less figure-packed counterpart to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, features in its chapter on employment a photo of a miners' strike and a chart on "Unions With Largest Membership."

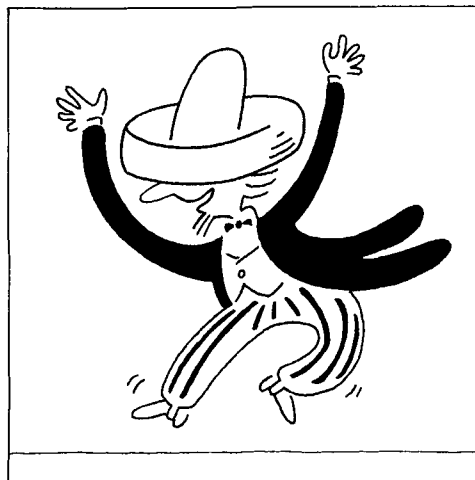
Canadian critics of the free-trade agreement argued that it would prompt firms to desert the country for the United States, particularly for the South, where unions are weak. The firms could thus lower their wage costs and taxes, and ship products duty-free back to Canada. The result would be Canadian job losses, pay cuts, and pressure to curtail social programs paid for by taxes. Employment loss in manufacturing, a sector that accounts for a large portion of trade with the United States, was a particular concern. Polarization between rich and poor, which has become worse in Canada (though it has not yet reached U.S. proportions), would be aggravated as middle-income wages eroded.

Mulroney responded that by strengthening the economy, the agreement would allow Canada to improve welfare programs, and he rashly promised that it would create "250,000 new jobs for young Canadians over and above current predictions." On a more sober note, J. David Richardson, a professor of

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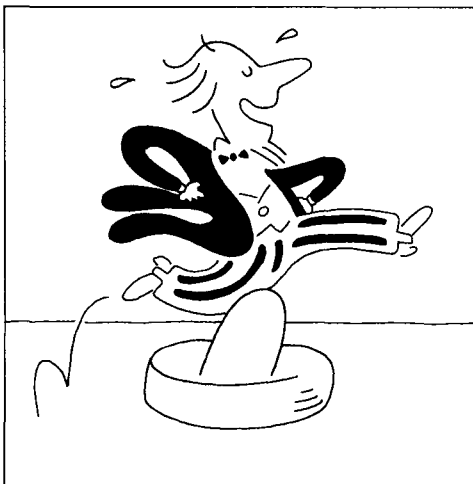
says, "More cutbacks in manufacturing push unemployment above 11 percent." The most recent figures put unemployment at 11.4 percent. The Canadian Manufacturers Association found that half the members it queried had examined the costs of operating in the United States, and of that half, three quarters had concluded that doing so would be cheaper. The press has been replete with stories of firms moving south for just that reason. The Ministry of Labor in Ontario, a major manufacturing province, found that more than half the layoffs are due to plant closings, so the production is gone for good, whereas less than a quarter of job losses in the 1982 recession had this permanent character. A senior adviser to the Finance Minister, speaking anonymously to the newsweekly *Maclean's*, concurred: "The problem now is that we are losing manufacturing activity itself to the United States." This is a far cry from even the direst projections of economists.

Now they say that they were looking at the long run, that four years is too little time to judge the results, and that any manufacturing losses have been caused by the recession. That does not explain why the losses are more serious now than in 1982, or why they are so much worse in Canada than in the United States. While the volume of U.S. manufacturing actually rose 1.6 percent from 1988 to 1991, that of Canadian manufac-



turing fell 11.4 percent. The explanation for the faulty predictions of the Canadian free-trade models may lie in their assumptions. Economics treats unemployment as a short-run effect of recessions, and according to James Stanford, of the New School for Social Research, the Canadian free-trade models assumed full employment and a fixed volume of investment in both countries. Capital would move to more-productive activities within Canada, but corporations would not widely shut factories and import goods from lower-wage U.S. plants. In short, the assumptions built into the models ignored critics' major concerns, and thus, not surprisingly, the models' conclusions suggested that the concerns were groundless. Stanford notes that the same assumptions are built into most models that predict favorable outcomes for NAFTA.

After the agreement was signed, business leaders began raising a clamor in the press that high taxes as well as labor costs were inhibiting their competitiveness. Mickey Cohen, a former deputy finance minister, told the *Toronto Financial Times* that Canada faced "greater pressure to harmonize" social programs with the United States: "If we're going to compete, we have to look more like the guys we're competing with." Sure enough, there has been pressure on Canadian social programs. The most significant was on unemployment insurance, which the Mulroney government weakened in November of 1990, so that workers had to be employed longer to be eligible and received benefits for an average of thirteen weeks less. Now the portion of the unemployed who are covered has dropped from 70 percent to 58 percent. Those no longer supported by unemployment insurance get welfare from provinces and local municipalities. But these levels of government are receiving a smaller share of revenue transfers from Ottawa. Some social programs have been trimmed. For example, in 1991 federal payments to Newfoundland, a poor province, were cut by \$180 million. The town of Port Aux Basques, in turn, lost \$1 million from its hospital budget and laid off a third of the staff. Threats to social programs would have occurred without the free-trade agreement—federal-gov-



ernment budget deficits were a problem before the treaty—and in time those Canadian manufacturers that survive will no doubt improve their productivity. But events have at least partly borne out what the agreement's critics said.

The Mexican Portent

UNIONS IN THE UNITED States are well aware of the Canadian experience as they look south toward a country with far lower wages than their own. Last year

William J. Cunningham, of the AFL-CIO, told the House Committee on the Budget that 50 to 70 percent of U.S. workers will lose ground under NAFTA. "Farther up the economic ladder, the affluent minority would certainly benefit. . . . Multinational corporations would hit the jackpot" by paying Mexican workers "a small fraction of average U.S. wages" and supplying no workmen's compensation, unemployment insurance, health insurance, or "other essentials of civilized life." The environmental movement has been vocal, particularly about the *maquiladora* plants set up in Mexico to export to the United States. Some managers privately admit that their plants moved from the United States to evade enforcement of health and environmental laws. A statement in *The Wall Street Journal* that the *maquilas* "very success is

helping turn much of the border region into a sinkhole of abysmal living conditions and environmental degradation" has achieved celebrity. Friends of the Earth and other environmental groups say that NAFTA will bring more of the same.

Citizens' groups in Mexico have not similarly debated NAFTA. The Partido Revolucionario Institucional, a party that actually does embrace both revolutionary and institutional elements, has held power since the 1930s, and once the President of Mexico sets a priority, opposition becomes a serious political matter. In the case of NAFTA the opposition has come mainly from a left-of-center political coalition headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. He almost defeated Salinas in the 1988 presidential election. (He may actually have won: the government prevented public scrutiny of

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almost half the ballots.) Cárdenas echoes his northern counterparts on NAFTA: "The exploitation of cheap labor" and "lax environmental protection" should not be "the premises upon which Mexico establishes links with the U.S., Canada, and the world economy." NAFTA will create jobs, but without political reform might not do much for wages, working conditions, or the environment. Despite an increase in foreign investment, manufacturing wages fell 25 percent in the 1980s. Collective action is risky, to put it mildly. If the leaders of a union local call a strike, they may well be ousted from their jobs, often with the cooperation of the main union federation, which is part of the PRI. And violence against organizers is not unusual.

Thus North American opposition to NAFTA (which in Canada has taken up where opposition to the U.S.-Canadian agreement left off) is centrally concerned that the treaty will free investors to roam in search of the lowest wages, weakest environmental and workplace regulations, and most-minimal taxes and other public contributions. NAFTA will, in short, free investors from political sovereignty. Governments, which at least claim to treat all people equally and to represent some common interest, will lose ground to the market, a process that, according to Maude Barlow, the chair of the Council of Canadians, an organization opposed to the agreement, means "weakest to the wall, survival of the fittest." Advocates of NAFTA do not entirely disagree but want more reliance on market forces and less on government nonetheless. "The bulk of government policies [are] motivated not by the desire to increase overall public welfare," writes Herbert G. Grubel, an economist at Simon Fraser University, in British Columbia. "Rather they are designed to provide benefits for special interest groups in order to secure their financial and voting support." If so, then perhaps the free market is a solution, and NAFTA is a step in that direction. Grubel applauds the way "increased international competition constrains the power of special interest groups."

Growth by Inequality

A CURIOUS THING IS THAT THE MORE CAREFULLY one considers the NAFTA debate, the less it seems that advocates and critics actually contradict each other. Those who favor the treaty say it will boost economic growth by strengthening the competitiveness of North American manufacturing and other firms in global markets. Opponents say it will threaten moderate-income wages (at least in Canada and the United States), erode social programs, and weaken the economic sovereignty of the state. It is perfectly conceivable that both predictions will be borne out. In the United States in the 1980s, according to government statistics, the growth of manufacturing productivity and of the economy as a whole was higher than it had been in the

1970s and was almost at the level of the 1950s and 1960s—yet 44 to 70 percent of the increase in income went to the richest one percent of all families (the variation depends on whether one adjusts for the declining size of families), and lower-middle-income families and the poor lost ground. Critics are saying that NAFTA will promote more of the same.

This lack of direct disagreement between advocates and critics of NAFTA reflects standard economic theory, which predicts both "gains from trade," meaning higher total income and more efficient production, and "trade adjustments," including job losses and salary cuts for some. "Trade adjustments" sounds pleasantly minor and temporary, but though economists do not like to say so out loud, their texts explicitly confirm that losses can be large and permanent. In one report on NAFTA, the U.S. International Trade Commission concluded that "U.S. skilled workers and owners of capital services would benefit more from lower prices and thus enjoy increased real income" (these are gains from trade), but that "unskilled workers in the United States would suffer a slight decline in real income" (these are adjustments). The ITC did not say what portion of U.S. workers it considers unskilled, but according to Jeff Faux, of the Economic Policy Institute, the ITC's model, based on the 1980 census, classifies 26 million American workers as skilled and 70 million as unskilled. Moreover, the ITC's assessment of a "slight decline" depends on timing. Standard economic theory says that wages in a given line of work converge totally and forever. (An adjustment for productivity remains: if productivity is 25 percent higher in one country, that country's income is 25 percent higher. But Mexico has, for example, auto and electronics export plants with productivity at U.S. levels.) Certainly it will take a long time for capital to move and for the changes in wage levels to occur. How long depends on judgments of investors which no one can quantify. But it could be a long way down for many Canadian and U.S. workers. There could also be substantial improvement for workers in Mexico, if political suppression of wage demands abates.

Economics leaves the debate at this impasse—a prediction of "gains" from overall growth but "adjustments" potentially harming large groups—because its most basic premises have to do only with gross income. In economic equations a dollar is a dollar, as long as it is adjusted for inflation, whether it accrues to a homeless person or a millionaire. The discipline has no means of comparing one person's additional "utility" from a dollar with another's. It can only be sure that more national income yields greater utility. Economists prefer a higher national income because, in principle, governments can redistribute it to achieve equity and leave everyone better off. Many economists advocate such redistribution, but they are the first to admit that this is a "normative" judgment quite separate from the discipline of economics itself. If NAFTA raises national income (as advocates promise) but distrib-

utes it in an inequitable fashion that governments will not remedy (as opponents believe), then the treaty poses a trade-off that economics, by its own assumptions, cannot address.

The Conditions of Well-being

IF WE ACCEPT THIS FRAMEWORK, the question becomes one of means and ends. Should the end be to promote the fastest possible growth, or is some adequate level of economic activity a means to broad material well-being? In both the United States and Canada, as mentioned, the 1980s saw rapid economic growth that went predominantly to the wealthy. The result in the United States has been a widespread sense of discontent, made vivid in the specter of homeless people and the worst urban riot in decades. The result in Canada has been similar though more moderate. Certainly the end should be broad material well-being for society, and though at other times and in other places the means would be different, the United States and Canada now need greater equity. If faster growth must be sacrificed to achieve that, so be it. The matter is not so clear-cut for Mexico. It needs both substantial economic growth, which could come from investments brought by NAFTA, and a more equitable distribution of income, which requires political reform.

The framework of the question posed this way remains limited, however. Textbook economics has been so thoroughly melded into what we accept as common sense that even critics of NAFTA rarely dispute the claim that freer trade will promote economic growth. A typical example is the labor leader William Cunningham's statement that "the affluent minority would certainly benefit" and "multinational corporations would hit the jackpot." In the end, will they really? The reasoning that leads to this conclusion is based on a conception of society as a set of individuals each maximizing his or her utility. Any divergence from that situation is, in the terminology of economics, an "imperfection." Simply put, the argument is that the less individuals are hindered from maximizing their utility, the more they will do just

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well as growth, Japan was first, Germany second, and the United States last. And by various measures (civilian research and development as a percentage of national income, productivity growth in manufacturing, and others) Japanese manufacturing was the most competitive, German the second most, and the United States' least. When economic leaders take too great a share of production and contribute too little to society, they lack the authority needed to guide patient, long-term growth.

That is a problem in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and one that NAFTA will only aggravate. As investment moves south, it will wind up in Mexico, undoubtedly providing some benefits there. Yet looking at long-term prospects, even Mexico might not do particularly well hitching itself to a North American trading bloc

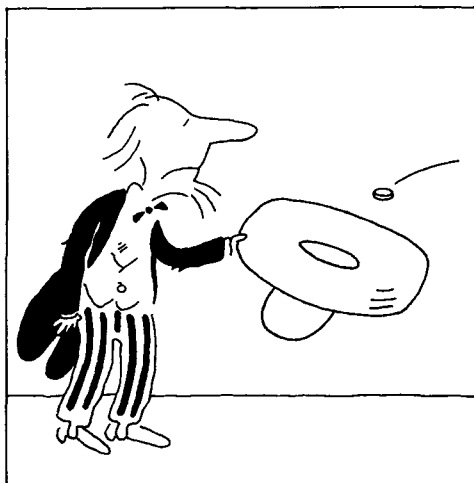
that, and the greater will be the sum of their utility, which is the gross national product.

Suppose society is actually more than a collection of individuals. It may be that some measure of equity is in fact required for the cooperation on which long-term economic growth depends. The late Chilean economist Fernando Fajnzylber studied this relationship. (No wonder he was interested: his country both grew slowly and had an inequitable income distribution, even by Latin American standards.) In a comparison of Japan, West Germany, and the United States, Fajnzylber found that since the mid-1960s income distribution has been most equitable in Japan, second most in West Germany, and least in the United States. Japan grew the fastest, Germany the second fastest, and the United States the slowest.

He noted that in level of savings as

well as growth, Japan was first, Germany second, and the United States last. And by various measures (civilian research and development as a percentage of national income, productivity growth in manufacturing, and others) Japanese manufacturing was the most competitive, German the second most, and the United States' least. When economic leaders take too great a share of production and contribute too little to society, they lack the authority needed to guide patient, long-term growth.

That is a problem in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and one that NAFTA will only aggravate. As investment moves south, it will wind up in Mexico, undoubtedly providing some benefits there. Yet looking at long-term prospects, even Mexico might not do particularly well hitching itself to a North American trading bloc that is more inequitable and less farsighted than either Europe or East Asia. The culprit is not wider trade but the way NAFTA will achieve it, by allowing investors to desert countries with better wages, stronger environmental and workplace regulations, and higher taxes. The EC, to which proponents often compare NAFTA, is increasing trade through a diametrically opposite project: the strengthening of common economic sovereignty, not the undermining of what exists. That is the sort of cohesive effort North America needs. □



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A Short Story



Slatland

by Rebecca Lee

I WENT TO PROFESSOR PINE FOR HELP TWICE IN MY life, once as a child and once as an adult. The first time, I was eleven and had fallen into an inexplicable depression. This happened in the spring of 1967, seemingly overnight, and for no reason. Any happiness in me just flew away, like birds up and out of a tree.

Until then I had been a normal, healthy child. My parents had never damaged me in any way. They had given me a dusty, simple childhood on the flatlands of Saskatchewan. I had two best friends—large, unselfish girls who were already gearing up for adolescence, sometimes laughing until they collapsed. I had a dog named Chest, who late at night brought me half-alive things in his teeth—bats with human faces, fluttering birds, speckled, choking mice.

My parents couldn't help noticing my sadness. They looked at me as if they were afraid of me. Sometimes at the dinner table the silence would be so deep that I felt compelled to reassure them. But when I tried to say that I was all right, my voice would crack and I would feel my face distorting, caving in. I would close my eyes then, and cry.

One night my parents came into my bedroom and sat down on my bed. "Honey," my father said, "your mother and I have been thinking about you a lot lately. We were thinking that maybe you would consider talking to somebody—you know, a therapist—about what is the matter." My father was an earnest, cheerful man, a geologist with a brush cut and a big heart. I couldn't imagine that a therapist would solve my problems, but my father looked hopeful, his large hand tracing a ruffle around my bedspread.

Three days later we were standing outside an office on the fourth floor of the Humanities Building. My appointment was not with a true therapist but rather with a professor of child psychology at the university where my father taught.

We knocked, and a voice called from behind the door in a bit of a singsong, "Come in you, come in you." Of course he was expecting us, but this still seemed odd, as if he

knew us very well or as if my father and I were both little children—or elves. The man sitting behind the desk when we entered was wearing a denim shirt, his blond hair slicked back like a rodent's. He looked surprised—a look that turned out to be permanent. He didn't stand up, just waved at us. From a cage in the corner three birds squawked. My father approached the desk and stuck out his hand. "Peter Bergen," my father said.

"Professor Roland Boland Pine," the man said, and then looked at me. "Hello, girlie."

Despite this, my father left me alone with him. Perhaps he just thought, as I did, that Professor Pine talked

like this, in occasional baby words, because he wanted children to respond as if to other children. I sat in a black leather chair. The professor and I just stared at each other for a while. I didn't know what to say, and he wasn't speaking either. It was easy to stare at him. As if I were staring at an animal, I felt no embarrassment.

"Well," he said at last, "your name is Margit?"

I nodded.

"How are you today, Margit?"

"I'm okay."

"Do you feel okay?"

"Yes. I feel okay."

"Do you go to school, Margit?"

"Yes."

"Do you like your teacher?"

"Not really."

"Do you hate him?"

"It's a her."

"Do you hate her?"

"No."

"Why are you here, Margit?"

"I don't know."

"Is everything at home okay?"

"Yes."

"Do you love your father?"

"Yes."

"Do you love your mother?" A long tic broke on his

For every situation there is a proper distance. Sometimes you need to rise above the earth to gain perspective

face, from the outer corner of his left eye all the way down to his neck.

"Yes."

"Is she a lumpy mother?"

"Pardon me?"

"Pardon me, Margit. I meant does your mother love you?"

"Yes."

"Does she love your father?"

I paused. "Yes."

"And does he love her?"

"I guess so."

"Margit, what is the matter?"

"Nothing. I just don't see why we're talking about my parents so much."

"Why don't they love each other?"

"They do—I said they do."

"Why can't you talk about this?"

"Because there's nothing to talk about."

"You can tell me the truth. Do they hurt each other? Lots of girls' parents hurt each other."

"No, they don't."

"Is one of them having an affair, maybe?"

I didn't say anything. "Maybe?" he repeated.

"Maybe," I said.

"Which one, Margit? Which one of the baby faces?"

I stared at him. Another tic passed over his face. "Pardon me, Margit. I meant which one of your parents is having the affair?"

"My dad. But I don't think he's actually having it. I just heard him tell my mom a few months ago that he was considering it."

"And do you think he is?"

"I don't know. A few weeks ago I picked up the phone and a woman was talking to my dad. She told him that she had to have her breasts removed and asked if that would make a difference."



"How difficult for you. How sad for the girlie-whirl." Another tic, like a fault line shifting. "Margit, may I tell you something from my own childhood?"

This worried me, but I said yes.

"When I was young, I loved my mother. She was a real lumper. Then one day, *kerpow*, she was dead." He held his forefinger to his head as if it were the barrel of a gun and stared at me for a few seconds without speaking. "It wasn't actually her, you see, but a woman of about her age who happened to be walking toward me on the sidewalk. A man came running and shot her. I was so devastated that I fell right on top of her. I didn't care if he shot me, too. I was only ten at the time, and my mother's death could have scarred me for life. But it didn't. And do you know how I got from that moment to this one—how I got from there to here, to sitting behind this desk now, talking to you?"

I shook my head. "How?"

"I rose above the situation. Literally I did. I felt my mind lift slightly out of my body, and I stared down at myself leaning over the bleed-

ing woman. I said to myself, very calmly, there is little Roland from New Orleans, the little erky-terk, realizing that someday his mother will die."

He was looking at me so intently, and his birds were flapping in their cage with such fervor, that I felt I had to say something. "Wow," I said.

"I suggest you try it, Margit. For every situation there is a proper distance. Growing up is just a matter of gaining perspective. Sometimes you just need to jump up for-

a moment, a foot above the earth. And sometimes you need to jump very far. It is as if there are thin slats, foot-holds, from here to the sun, Margit, for the baby faces to step on. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said.

"Slatland, flatland, mapland."

"Pardon me?"

"Pardon me, Margit. I know so many languages that sometimes I say words out of place."

At the end of the session I asked him when I should return. He told me that another visit wouldn't be necessary, that usually his therapy worked the first time.

I didn't in fact understand what he had said to me, but his theory seemed to help anyway, as if it were a medication that worked whether you understood it or not. That very evening I was having dinner with my parents. It started as the usual dinner—me staring at my plate, my parents staring at me as if I were about to break in two. But about halfway through the meal I started feeling light-headed. Nothing frightening happened, but I did manage to lift slightly out of myself. I looked down at our tiny family. I saw my father from above, the deep map of his face. I understood in an instant that of course he was having an affair, and that he was torn between my mother and this other, distant woman. I saw my beautiful mother from above, and I could see how she must hate this other woman, yet sympathize as well, because this other woman was very ill. I understood how complicated it was to be an adult, and how haunting, and how lovely. I longed to be back in my body then, to be breathing and eating, straining toward maturity. And when I returned, one split second later, I hugged my parents, one after the other, with a spontaneity that a depressed person could never muster.

IN THE TWENTY YEARS THAT PASSED BETWEEN MY first visit to Professor Pine and my second, from 1967 to 1987, I remained in the same city. I graduated from Massey and then from LeBoldus High and then from the University of Saskatchewan, with a degree in biology. As an adult, I worked as a soil consultant, traveling around the province to small satellite towns in a flatbed truck that I could sleep in, if necessary, on warm nights.

Bouts of the depression did return, but they never overwhelmed me. Perhaps my life was not the most rigorous testing ground for Professor Pine's technique, because my life was relatively free of tragedy. Most of my depression erupted out of nowhere. I'd be in the fields in the midst of a bright day, and a dreariness would mysteriously descend. I'd sink into it for a few minutes, but the lift would always come. I would take a step up, or two or three, and recognize how good life in fact was. From above, my job appeared to me excellent and strange. There I was, under a blazing sun, kneeling in a yellow ex-

panse, weighing samples of earth. And later, with instruments as tiny and beautiful as jewelry, testing the dirt for traces of nitrogen and phosphorus, the gleam of potash.

ONE NIGHT, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE YEAR 1985, I made the mistake of describing this technique to my fiancé, Rezvan Balescu, the Romanian liar. We had known each other for only two months at this point, but we were already engaged. We were standing on a small balcony outside our apartment. He was smoking, wearing pajamas under a down-filled jacket, and he was in the midst of one of his tirades on North America, which he loved and hated. "This place is so strange to me, so childish. You have so many problems that are not real, and you are so careful and serious about them. People discuss their feelings as if they were great works of art or literature that need to be analyzed and examined and passed on and on. In my country people love or they hate. They know that a human being is mysterious, and they live with that. The problems they have are real problems. If you do not eat, that's a problem. If you have no leg, that's a problem. If you are unhappy, that is not a problem to talk about."

"I think it is," I said.

"Exactly. That is because you are an American. For you, big things are small, and small things are big." Rezvan was always making these large declarations on America in a loud voice from our balcony.

"I bet you one million in money," Rezvan said as he blew out smoke, "that the number of hours Americans spend per week in these—what do you call them?—*therapy* offices is exactly the same number of hours Romanians spend in line for bread. And for what? Nothing. To make their problems bigger. They talk about them all day so at night they are even bigger."

"I don't agree. The reason why people talk about their problems is to get over them, get rid of them. I went to a therapist once and he was very helpful."

"You?" He lifted an eyebrow, took a drag.

"Yes, when I was eleven."

"Eleven? What could be the problem at eleven?"

"I was just sad. My parents were getting divorced, and I guess I could tell that my dad was about to leave."

"But isn't that the correct emotion—sadness when a father leaves? Can a therapist do anything to bring your father home?"

"No, but he gave me a way to deal with it."

"And what is that way? I would like to know."

"Well, just a way to separate from the situation."

"How do you separate from your own life?"

"Well, you rise above it. You gain some objectivity and perspective."

"But is this proper? If you have a real problem, should you rise above it? When a father leaves a child, the child feels sad. This seems right to me. This rising above, that

is the problem. In fact, that is the problem of America. I cannot tell my family back home that if they are hungry or cold, they should just rise above it. I cannot say, 'Don't worry, go to the movies, go shop, here is ten dollars in money, go buy some candy. Rise above your situation.'"

"That's not what I mean. I mean you literally rise above it. Your mind hovers over your body, and you understand the situation from a higher perspective." I knew that if he pushed me far enough, this would end up sounding insane.

"So this is what your man, your eleven-year-old therapist, teaches you: to separate your mind from your body, to become *unhinged*. This does not teach you to solve the problem; this teaches you to be a crazy person."

But already I was drifting up until I was watching us from the level of the roof. There she is, I thought, Margit Bergen, twenty-nine years old, in love with Rezvan of Romania, a defector who escaped political hardship to arrive first in a refugee camp in Austria and a year later in Regina, Saskatchewan, where he now stands on a balcony in the moonlight, hassling her about America, as if she contained all of it inside her.

I HAD MET REZVAN IN MY FATHER'S LAB AT THE UNIVERSITY. Rezvan was a geologist, like my father. Technically, for grant reasons, he was a graduate student, but my father considered him a peer, because Rezvan had already worked for years as a geologist for the Romanian government.

Originally he had been a supporter of Ceausescu. In fact, his father, Andrei, had been a friend of Ceausescu's right up until the time Andrei died, in 1985. Rezvan, by his own account, stood by his father's deathbed as he died and held his father's hand, but both father and son refused to speak, because Rezvan had by then ceased to be loyal to Ceausescu.

In the two years that Rezvan and I lived together, I would often rise from sleep to find him hunched over his desk, the arm of his lamp reaching over him. He wrote long letters into the night, some in English and some in Romanian. The English ones, he said, were to various government officials, asking for help in getting his family over to Canada. The ones in Romanian were to his family, an assortment of aunts and uncles and cousins. He wrote quickly, as in a fever, and if I crept up on him and touched his back, he would jump and turn over his letters immediately before looking up at me in astonishment. At the time, I thought this was simply an old habit of fear, left over from living for so long in a police state.

Sometimes he said he could not forgive his country for keeping his family captive. He told what he called jokes—dark, labyrinthine stories that always ended with some cartoonish, undignified death for Ceausescu: his head in a toilet, his body flattened by a steamroller. Other times he spoke about his country with such longing—the wet mist

of Transylvania, the dark tunnels beneath the streets of his town, the bookstores lined with propaganda that opened into small, dusty rooms in back filled with *real* books.

In this same way Rezvan loved and hated America. He would rant about it from the balcony, but then we would return to our bed and sit side by side, our backs to the wall, and watch the local and then the national news, where almost every night somebody would criticize the Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney. Rezvan could never get over this: men appearing on television to insult their leader night after night, and never getting pulled off the air. Sometimes we would turn to the news from the United States, which we received through a cable channel from Detroit. This was a real treat for Rezvan during the period of Reagan-bashing. "I love that man," he said to me one night.

"Reagan? You don't like Reagan."

"I know, but look at him now." They were showing a clip of Reagan waving. His face did look kind. His eyes were veering off, looking skyward. He looked like somebody's benevolent, faintly crazy grandfather.

"All day long people insult him and he doesn't kill any of them."

Rezvan sometimes skipped work and came with me to the fields. He'd ride in the back of the truck, standing up, so that his head was above the cab, the wind pouring over him. He wanted to know all the details of my job. He became better than I was at some things. He could spot poor field drainage from far away. He loved to point out the signs of it—the mint, the rushes, the wire grass, the willows.

For lunch we stopped in the towns along the way at small, fragrant home-style diners. Almost all of them were run by Ukrainian women. Each one adored Rezvan. He would kiss their hands and speak in his strange accent—part British, part Romanian—and they would serve him free platefuls of food, one after another, hovering over him as if he were a long-lost son from the old country.

One afternoon, while we were driving back to the city from a little town called Yellow Grass, I fell asleep at the wheel. I woke up after the crash to see Rezvan crumpled against the passenger door. I felt myself rising then, far above the car, far above even the treeline. From there I watched myself crawl out of the wreck and drag Rezvan out onto the grassy shoulder. And then, instead of watching my own body run down the long charcoal highway, I stayed above Rezvan. I watched the trees bow in the wind toward his body, listening for his heartbeat.

Later that night, when I entered his hospital room for the first time, I expected him to refuse to speak to me. Rezvan smiled, though. "In my country," he said, "you could work for Ceausescu. He has been trying to do this to me for years." I started apologizing then, over and over. Rezvan just motioned me toward the bed, and then put his arms around me. "It's okay, it's okay," he said. "Don't cry. This is America. This is what is supposed to happen. I will sue you, and your insurance will give us

money, and we will go on a trip. To California, a vacation. I am so happy."

I wiped my eyes and looked at him. His head was cocked to the side. A thin white bandage was wrapped around his forehead, and blood was still matted in the black curls of his hair. One side of his face was torn apart. His leg was suspended in a sling. Still, he looked at me incredulously, wondering how I could be crying when this was such a stroke of luck.

For the next few months he had a cane, which he loved. He liked to point at things with it. The scars settled into faint but permanent tracks down the left side of his face. He liked that, too. We saw the movie *Scarface* over and over again. When he discarded the cane, he still walked with a slight limp, which gave his gait an easy rocking motion that seemed strangely to suit him. He never once blamed me; I don't think it ever crossed his mind.

THE SUN AT NIGHT

The sun at night, under the hill,
under the alligator in his pond,
under the turtle's dangling foot,
between Earth and the spiraled threads
of milk that trickle from the eye
of God into the mortal eye and burn,

the sun that shone into the weeds
and under the lids of dead boys
at Antietam Creek and at Khe Sanh
and into the eyes of five kings
hanged by Joshua outside their cave,
the sun God hanged that day for battle—

night then, in the City of Triumph,
victory cars on bridges, lanterns
in midair, bright watercraft, glad singing,
smoke and red wine in the mouth, hands
delicate on harp and flute, and in the dark
beyond great ocean waves great winds . . .

the hero looked back into his little house
where tendernesses passed from face to face,
he looked, and under the five grim trees
he turned away, under the stars and planets
set out over the small hill after
a destination, after the sun at night.

—Brooks Haxton

REZVAN AND I STAYED ENGAGED FOR TWO YEARS. He seemed to think of engagement as an alternative to marriage rather than as a lead-up to it. I didn't mind, actually. I just wanted to be with him. Life with Rezvan had a sort of gloss to it always. He passed quickly from emotion to emotion, from sadness to gratitude to arrogance, but he never fell into depression, ever.

Perhaps because I was so happy with Rezvan, I did not notice what may have been obvious signs. But, oddly enough, the signs indicating that a man is in love with another woman are often similar to the signs of an immigrant in a new country, his heart torn in two. He wrote long letters home; he hesitated to talk about the future; during lonely nights he seemed to be murmuring as he fell asleep, but not to me.

Nearly a year passed before I even noticed anything, or admitted to myself that I noticed anything. Then one day Rezvan received a phone call at four in the morning. I didn't understand a word of it, since it was in Romanian, but in my half sleep I could hear him mutter the word *rila* again and again, sometimes insistently. And when he hung up, after about an hour and a half, he just sat there in the living room like a paralyzed man, the light slowly rising across his body. I asked him, "Rezvan, what does *rila* mean?" He told me that it meant "well-lit," as in a room.

Two days later, as I walked up our driveway in my housecoat, the mail in my hand, I glanced through the letters and noticed a thick letter from Rilia Balescu. *Rila* was Rilia, a person, a relative. When I walked in the door, Rezvan was standing in his striped pajamas drinking coffee, smoking, scratching his head. As I handed him the letter, I tried to read his face, but saw nothing. So I said, "Who is Rilia?"

"She is my sister, my baby sister. Gavrilă."

Does an extra beat pass before one tells a lie? This is what I had always believed, but Rezvan answered immediately. Perhaps he had been waiting for the question.

"I didn't know you had a sister."

"I don't like to talk about her. We disowned each other long ago. She follows Ceausescu still; she has pictures of him and his son on her wall as if they were rock stars. I am trying to bring her over, but she is stubborn. She would rather go to the Black Sea and vacation with her boys than come here and live with me."

"So why have you never told me about her?"

"Because it is not wise to speak aloud the one thing you want more than anything. You know that."

"No, I don't know that."

"It's true. Romanians have a word for it: *ghinion*. It means don't speak aloud what you want most. Otherwise it will not happen. You must have a word for this in English?"

"Jinx."

Can An Intelligent Person Be Religious?



Among the well-educated the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted, unlettered, and irrational, that the price of salvation is checking your mind at the Pearly Gates. Yet, from Harvard to Berkeley, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely the result of the failure of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, rationalism, hedonism, consumerism, technological utopianism, Freudianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

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"Okay. I did not tell you about my sister because of jinx."

"Why did you tell me her name meant 'well-lit'?"

"Pardon?"

"The other day I asked you, and you said that 'Rilia' was the word for 'well-lit.'"

"No, no. *Rila* is the word for 'well-lit.' *Rilia* is my sister." He smiled and kissed my face. "We will have to work on your accent."

Over the next month we settled into a routine. When Rezvan finished writing his letters in the night, he padded down the driveway, set the letters in the mailbox, and lifted the tiny, stiff red flag so that our mailman would stop in the morning. And then, after Rezvan was asleep, I would rise out of bed and go to the mailbox myself, pick out the ones to Rilia, and slip them into the pocket of my housecoat. I did the same thing with the letters she sent him. I collected those in the morning.

At first it didn't feel like a strategy. But I was desperate to know if Rilia really was his sister or his wife—as if her handwriting would tell me. Rezvan left for work an hour before I did, and I opened the letters then.

I sat on our bed, laying the pages in front of me, cross-referencing. Some of her passages were blacked out by censors. I found many names, but mostly two, Gheorghe and Florian, again and again. Gheorghe and Florian, Gheorghe and Florian, Gheorghe and Florian. I began to realize, very slowly, that these were probably their children.

On one of these mornings my mother showed up at my door to drop off a skirt she had sewed for me. "Good," she said, bustling in, "you're home. I wanted to drop this off."



Already, as she said this, she was rapidly moving through the rooms of our apartment. My mother liked to do this, to catch me off guard and check all my rooms immediately for anything I might hide if given the time. "What is this?" she said, reaching the bedroom, where all the pages were strewn across the bed.

"Oh, that's just some stuff I'm reading for Rezvan. Proofreading."

She picked up a sheet. "Oh, so now you proofread in Romanian?"

I smiled weakly. She didn't pry, but for once I wished she would. What I wanted to do was tell her that this was my life spread across the bed, thin as paper, written in a language I could not understand, dotted with four names—Rezvan, Gavrilă, Gheorghe, Florian—but never my own. I wanted to ask her how she felt when my father was having an affair. And I wanted to ask what happened to the other woman. My father never married her, even after he and my mother split. Where had she drifted off to? Did she ever lose her breasts? Did she get well again? Was she happy somewhere now?

I didn't tell my mother anything, but when she left that day, she gestured toward the bedroom. "You know that you can find people at the university who will translate that for you."

I nodded, and stared at my feet.

"Maybe you don't really need them translated? Maybe you already know what they say?" She ducked her face under, so that she could look at my face. "It'll be okay," she said, "either way."

I stockpiled the letters for two months. I didn't intend

to be malicious; I was just sitting on them until I could figure out what to do. Every night as I drove home from the fields, I thought, I will tell Rezvan tonight; I will say I know everything and I am leaving. But when dinner came, I could hardly speak. It was as if I were eleven all over again.

Even Rezvan was getting depressed. He said that his letters were turning out to be all in vain. Perhaps, he said, he would quit writing them altogether. One night he said, "Nothing gets through those bastards. Perhaps I will never see Rilia again." Then he limped to the sink, rocking back and forth, and filled his glass with water. He turned to me and said, "Why would they want to keep us apart, anyway?" His head was tilted to the side, and he looked like a child. He stared at me as if he really expected me to answer.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know about that stuff."

But of course I did. At the other end, across the ocean, men in uniforms were collecting letters and censoring them, blacking out whatever threatened them, and at this end I in my housecoat was doing the same thing.

I tried to rise above the situation, but that strategy didn't work at all. I was increasingly distressed at what I saw. I'd fly up and look down. There she is, I'd say, Margit Bergen of Saskatchewan. Who would have thought she'd grow up so crooked, crouched on her bed, obstructing love, hoarding it, tearing it apart with her own hands.

Until this point in my life I had always thought of myself as an open-minded person, able to step into another's shoes. But I could not picture this Rilia. Her face, and the faces of her children, were blank for me. I hoped that this inability, or unwillingness, to imagine another's face was not hatred, but I was deeply ashamed that it might be.

Finally, one windy night in November, as I cut into a roast, I said, "Rezvan, is Rilia your wife?"

"What do you know of Rilia? Has she called? Has she sent a letter?"

"No, not at all. I was just wondering."

"Tell me what you know."

"I don't know anything. I was just asking."

"Have you spoken to her on the phone?"

"No, I have not." I enunciated this very clearly. "Is she your wife, Rezvan?"

"I am not a liar," he said. "I will marry you to prove this. We will go to British Columbia and get married in the trees. Whenever you want. Tomorrow, if you want."

THE NEXT MORNING I PUT THE LETTERS IN A BAG and drove straight to the administrative offices at the university. A woman disappeared and reappeared with a list of professors who could translate Romanian for me. I had my choice of four. I glanced down the list and there, at number three, was Professor Roland Pine.

I found him in the same office. He had aged well, his

hair now ash instead of blond, a few extra lines across his face. When he stood up to greet me, I saw that I had grown to be about half a foot taller than he was. His tic was still there, flashing across his face every fifteen seconds or so. As I shook his hand, I marveled that it had continued like this since the last time I'd seen him, keeping time as faithfully as a clock.

"My name is Margit Bergen. I came to you once as a child."

"Hello, Margit. It's nice to see you again. Was I helpful?"

"Yes, very. I've always been grateful."

"What was the problem in those days?"

"Just childhood depression, I guess. My parents were splitting up."

He squinted at me, and turned his face slightly to the side. "Oh, yes," he said. "That's right. Of course. Little Margit. You were such a girlie-whirl. So sad. What did you become?"

"You mean in my life?"

"In your life. What did you become?"

"A soil consultant."

"What a good job for you." He gestured toward the black leather chair. His birds fought in their high cages, their wings tearing at each other. "Mortalhead. You be nice to Eagerheart." He turned to me. "The kids love funny names, you know. Mortalhead, Eagerheart, Quick-eye."

I smiled and sat down in the chair, pulling a stack of letters from my bag. "Professor Pine . . .," I said.

"Call me Roland," he said. He leaned back. His face cracked in a tic. "Roland Boland. Just think: little Roland and little Margit, the professor and the soil consultant, back again, sitting in a warm office surrounded by bird-people." He rolled his eyes and grinned, almost girlishly.

I didn't know what to say. "Yes, it's nice," I eventually said. "Actually, Roland, I was wondering if you could help me out with a problem I have."

"I thought I solved all your problems." He looked disappointed.

"You did. I mean, for twenty years you did."

"What could be the problem now?"

"I need you to translate these letters for me, from Romanian."

"Romanian?" He took the stack of letters from me, and began to leaf through them. "Is your name Rezvan?" he said.

"He's a friend of mine."

"Then you should not read his letters." He smiled.

"Professor Pine, I really need you to do this for me."

"Who is Rilia?"

"I don't know. Look, you don't even need to read them to me. Just read them to yourself and tell me if the people writing them are married."

"Why do you want to know?"

"That doesn't matter. I just do."

"Why?"

I didn't say anything.

"Are you being a dirty-girlic?" He smiled—and then a tic, as forked as lightning.

I sighed and looked over at his birds, who were cawing loudly. One was green with black wings, and it was flapping furiously, staring at the letters fluttering in Professor Pine's hand.

"Fine, Professor Pine. If you don't want to read them, I'll take them to somebody else." I reached for the letters.

He pulled them back, toward his chest. "Okay, okay, girlic," he said. "You are so stubborn, Margit."

He read softly, in a lilting voice, as if he were reading me a bedtime story. "Rilia says, Remember how tiny Florian was at his birth? Now he is forty-five kilos, the same as his brother. Rilia says, Remember the Black Sea, it is as blue as the first time we went to it. Rilia says that Rezvan must be lying when he says there is so much food that sometimes he tosses rotten fruit from the window."

I interrupted. "Do you think they are married?"

"Well, they are both Balescus."

"They could be brother and sister?"

He frowned, and leafed through the letters again. "But here she calls him darling. Darling, barling, starling."

He looked up then. "Oh, no," he said, "don't cry. Please don't cry." He jumped up, came around the side of the desk, and crouched beside my chair. He looked up at me. His face was close, and the next tic was like slow motion. I saw the path that it followed, curving and winding like a river down his face.

He sat back on the edge of his desk. "It's going to be okay," he said. "We just have to figure out what the girlic wants. If you want Rezvan, the liar face, you can have him. Is that what you want?"

"No, I don't think so. I mean, I do, but I can't. He has kids and everything."

"Then it sounds like you've made up your mind already."

"Not really," I said.

"Margit, you need some perspective."

"Perspective?"

"You know"—he rolled his eyes upward—"Slatland."

Slatland—I remembered that that was what he'd called it, the drifting up and looking down.

"I've tried Slatland. It didn't work," I said.

"Slatland always works. Just close your eyes, all right, girlic?"

I started to stand up. "Thanks for your help, Professor Pine. I really have to go now." But then I felt it, the lift, and my mind started rising, until the caws of Mortalhead and Eagerheart and Quickeye were far below me. I could see the yellow fields surrounding my town, and then even those went out of focus. I hurtled faster and faster

until I finally stopped, what seemed like minutes later.

So this is Slatland, I thought. I looked down, and to my left I saw North America, large and jagged, flanked by oceans. Its face was beautiful—craggy, broken, lined with rivers. I found my part of the continent, a flat gold rectangle in the upper middle. I saw what my daily life looked like from this distance: my truck beetling through the prairies, dust rising off its wheels the way desire must rise, thousands of fragments of stone lifting off the earth. And when the truck stopped and I stepped out into the bright, empty fields, my loneliness looked extreme. I could almost *see* it, my longing and desire for Rezvan rising out of me the way a tree rises out of its trunk. I perceived, in an instant, exactly what I should do to keep him. I saw how simple it all would be, just to keep collecting the letters every morning, one by one, in order that what was between Rezvan and his wife would die slowly and easily and naturally, and what was between him and me would grow in exactly the same proportion.

If I had been able to climb down then, to drop out of Slatland at that moment, everything would have remained simple, and probably Rezvan and I would still be together. But Slatland seemed to have a will of its own. It would not let me go until I looked down to my right. If I was willing to see the simplicity, the purity, of my own desire, then I also had to see the entire landscape—the way desire rises from every corner and intersects, creates a wilderness over the earth.

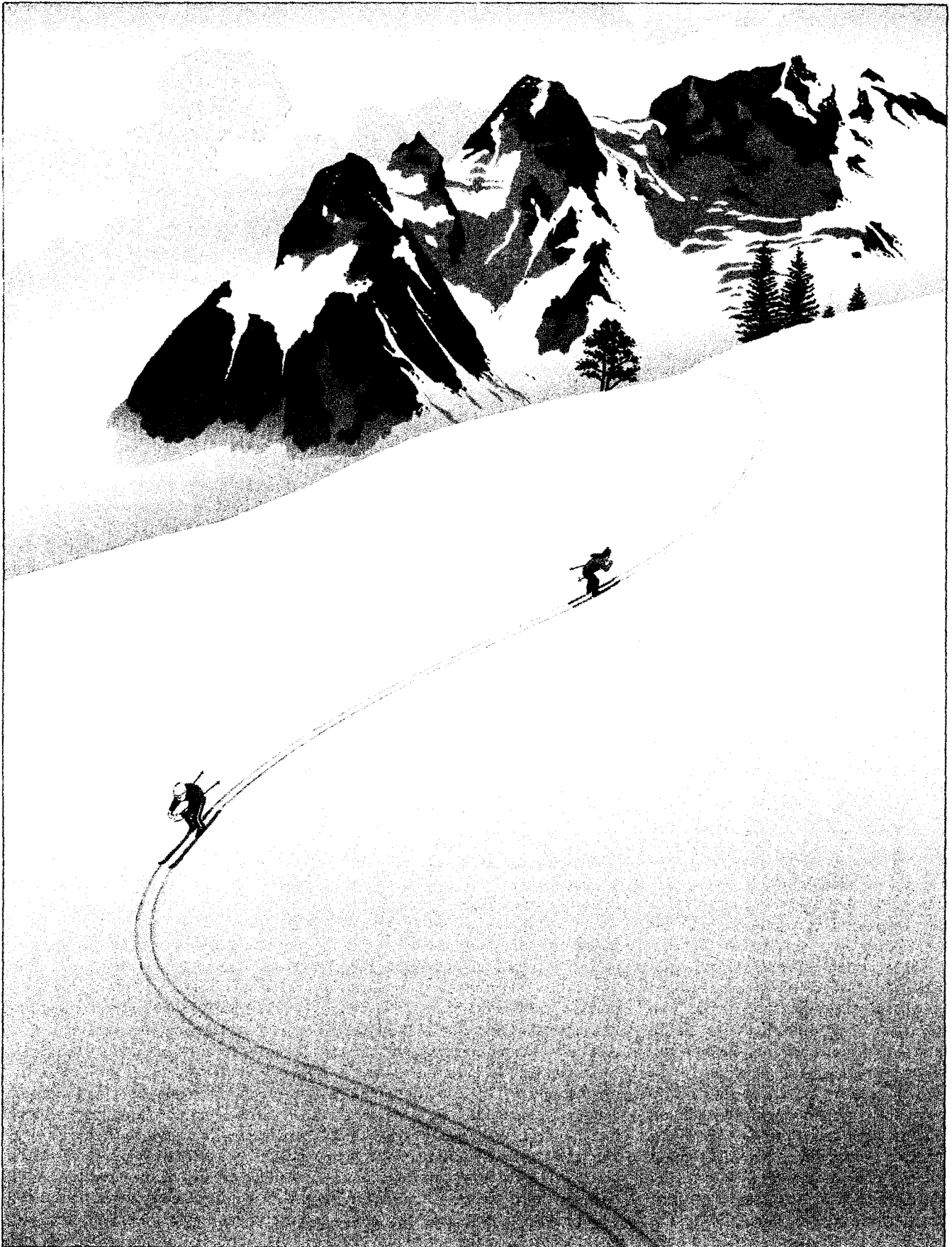
I stood on Slatland a long time before I looked down to my right. There it was, Eastern Europe, floating above the Mediterranean. I traced with my finger the outline of Romania. I squinted, down through the mist and mountains, down through the thick moss of trees, until I found her. She stood in a long line of people, her forty-five-kilo children hanging on her skirts. She bent to them and broke for them some bread as hard as stone. I hovered a few feet above her and watched. Even so, I might still have been able to return to my own life, my own province, unchanged if she hadn't turned her face upward right then, as if she had felt some rain, and looked directly at me.

This all happened very fast, in a blink of my eyes. When I opened them, Professor Pine was sitting on his desk, watching me. "You're a real erky-terk," he said, with a tic so extreme that it looked like it might swallow his face. He walked me to the door and handed me the letters, which later that night I would give to Rezvan. We would be standing on the balcony in the semidarkness of the moon, and I would be surprised at how easily they passed through my hands, as easily as water.

The birds shrieked. "Birdmen!" Professor Pine said. "Sometimes I feel like saluting them," he said to me. He shook my hand. "Good luck, girlic-whirl." Then he went up on his tiptoes and kissed me good-bye. □

ENCOUNTER

BY GUY BILLOUT



Music

GEORGE HALING/GRAZIA NERI



The Greatest Opera House

La Scala is one thing opera lovers can agree on

by Matthew Gurewitsch

OF ALL THE days in the year, none holds a more cherished place in the hearts of the Milanese than December 7, the feast of Ambrose, the city's patron saint, whose burial chamber stands open only for the holiday. Citizens push through the fair that jams the close, crooked streets of the neighborhood of Sant' Ambrogio, into the sober perpendicularities of the church of that name, and down the tight staircase to the crypt where the fourth-century governor and bishop rests under glass in episcopal splendor.

The other grand ritual on the Feast of Sant' Ambrogio is opening night at La Scala, a ceremony of more recent date and a good deal less accessible. Ask anyone who cares about opera to name the greatest opera house in Italy, and the answer, not only in Milan, will

surely be La Scala. Ask for the greatest opera house in the world, and chances are the answer will be the same. Everyone would place it among the top three—but how many would agree about the other two?

Some opera houses make a happy impression from the street. La Scala is not one of them. Soot streaks the other neoclassical façade. Across a forlorn little pediment an undistinguished Phaëton races Apollo's chariot toward his predestined fall. The portico, with its cramped, gloomy arches, might be the forecourt of a Piranesi prison. But there hang the handsome buff playbills, their distinctive art nouveau design unchanged for decades. Even with rain whipping down from the Alps, a music lover, freezing at the threshold, reads them with an anticipatory glow.

Never more so than on opening night, when international arbiters of art and culture rub elbows with the mighty from politics, industry, entertainment, and fashion. Conspicuous among last year's audience were the President of Italy (since replaced); his well-mannered security entourage; the King and Queen of Sweden, acknowledging an intermission ovation with a wave from the royal box; Renata Tebaldi, beloved diva of the fifties and sixties, honey-blond and statuesque in retirement; the ageless ballerina Carla Fracci, in a cocoon of lace, radiant as a bride; and, of interest to some foreign reporters (though apparently to few others), breast-baring animal-rights activists on the warpath against patrons in furs. Such was the crush of onlookers in the narrow streets near the theater that one had to approach via the piazza, past three checkpoints where towering carabinieri loomed on horseback, the red plumes in their hats aquiver in the stone-cold air. Twenty minutes before curtain time the funereal ushers, called *maschere*, wearing chains around their necks like chatelains, still had the auditorium practically to themselves.

And what a sight it was, as beautiful and full of promise as any piece of theater architecture in the world. There are opera houses that share, no doubt for a reason, the sybaritic taste of the brothel; Proust described such a one, an enchanted grotto with foamy Nereids splashed across the bulging boxes that the French so aptly call *baignoires*, or "bathtubs." The design of La Scala is intentionally chaste. Well into the twentieth century the house was the private property of the boxholders, who hung their coats of arms for all to see and dressed up the interiors as gaudily as they pleased. The coats of arms are stripped away now, but the flashy mirror treatments in perhaps a half dozen boxes remain, accents of Arabesque Victorian glamour that only offset a Platonic purity.

With its square, evenly spaced boxes, each fitted like a window into a sweeping horseshoe six tiers high, the auditorium today is magnificent yet austere. The royal box, two stories high, is a sort of stage unto itself, flanked by two chaste caryatids and lit with a quiet chandelier. For the rest, the house is even more discreet with ornament. In the horseshoe Grecian sphinxes in low relief alternate with

simple candelabra. Above the orchestra four Titans' faces stare down from on high. Over the nobly proportioned stage a pair of angels hold a garlanded clock face on which the impatient may read the time. The ceiling forgoes swirling allegory for a pale painted wheel studded with orderly trompe l'oeil rosettes. A few days before the first night of the season, in the outer corridors a wanderer could encounter a woman on a ladder, polishing the crystal pendants of the wall sconces as a male co-worker touched up chipped paint on hooks in the cloakroom. And someone, or maybe an army, festooned the house for the evening in the subtly spice-scented pink and white carnations that tradition demands.

At six o'clock sharp an unlikely congregation was in place for *Parsifal*, Wagner's last, most enigmatic sermon on his perennial theme of sin and deliverance. "Wagner on opening night at La Scala!" said Riccardo Muti, the house's music director and principal conductor, moments before showtime, donning tails in his dressing room. "It is a provocation!" German music, six hours of it, no comfort for the fashionable—but it was played with a transparency and dramatic fire to hold the imagination spellbound. Now and then through the evening a door banged as a fainthearted boxholder ducked out, but not often. And for the first time in years the curtain calls proceeded without a single eruption from the censorious fanatics in the gallery. This year the season opens more conventionally, with Verdi's *Don Carlo*, in a Franco Zeffirelli production, with Luciano Pavarotti cast for the first time as the hapless Spanish infante, and Muti, the world's foremost Verdian, again on the podium.

DEEP IN today's Iron Age of operatic invention, many major houses get by on pure nostalgia, perpetuating a degenerate cult of escapism. Others amuse themselves with games of deconstruction, which by accident or design end up subordinating the composer's text to the director's marginalia. To an extent La Scala falls into these patterns too: competition for the most exciting musicians and directors makes it inevitable. What sets La Scala apart is the conviction that the scores of Mozart, Bellini, Rossini, Verdi, and Wagner are as urgent today as when the ink was wet on their pages.

Muti sets the example. He trusts his material unconditionally. His rehearsals, whether with the singers at the piano or onstage with the orchestra, proceed on the understanding that regardless of what staging and production values may contribute, the soul of communication dwells in the purposeful delivery of every word and note.

The late Herbert von Karajan eventually arrived at the belief that to realize his musical intentions, he had not only to conduct but to direct the stage action, too. I once asked Muti if he ever thought of doing the same. "*Ciascuno a suo mestiere*," he answered, with an emphatic shake of his head. "To each his own craft." But he polishes line readings with an acuity that only the greatest directors of spoken drama can match, and as he has said to singers privately when they were bemoaning the inanities of a new production, "*La regia è qui*": "The directing is done here," in the music studio.

Not many contemporary pieces have been heard at La Scala of late. Yet when everything falls into place, it feels as though the opera were unfolding under the composer's personal scrutiny—as would have been the case in the old days, per standard contract. The house tingles the way the New York State Theater used to when George Balanchine was watching from the wings and his ballets, new and old, caught the electricity of creation.

No doubt much of La Scala's cachet rests on a sense of heritage, but does history account for this? There's no better place to ponder the question than the annex to the opera house, formerly known as the Casino Ricordi, now the Museo Teatrale alla Scala. In these chambers, which communicate with an upper lobby of the opera house, the Ricordi dynasty, publishers of Italian opera composers from Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti to Verdi and Puccini, conducted their business through many of the glory years of the past century. Audiences may circulate there at their pleasure during intermissions; during the day, if no rehearsals are in progress, visitors to the museum may step into an open box and take a look at the auditorium.

In the eleven rooms of the museum portraits crowd the walls with likenesses of composers, of divas from Giuditta Pasta (Bellini's first Norma) and Teresina Stolz (Verdi's chosen Aida) to

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Above, a post-performance ovation as the house lights begin to rise; below, a barista awaits the between-acts crush

Maria Callas, their sister in immortality. Look around and find a bare-shouldered bust of Caruso, a death mask of Puccini.

Most evocative of all is the museum's Verdiana, two amazing roomfuls: the composer's first spinet, a scarf woven for the premiere of *Aida*, a lock of his hair, several of his watches, gilded wreaths made in his honor, the manuscript of the Requiem, a portrait bust, his death mask, his writing desk from the Grand Hôtel Milan, where he died (a few minutes' walk down Via Manzoni), complete with inkwell, pen, stationery, sealing wax, playing cards, a French-Italian dictionary, a train schedule, and the nine-course menu of his last meal.

Maestro Giampiero Tintori, the museum's director, sits behind the reading room in a tiny study amid boxes of scenery designs stacked floor to ceiling. As a soldier returning from Russia after the Second World War, he saw the theater he loved in ruins, destroyed by Allied bombs in August of 1943. Photographs in the Sala Gialla, the "yellow hall" that does double duty as the boardroom and a rehearsal space, show something of what he saw then (the ironwork of the stage, the left side of the horseshoe but not the right, a mass of rubble from the fallen roof) and stages in the unbelievably rapid reconstruction. "*La Scala è Milano*," he says. "*La Scala and the Duomo*. La Scala was the first thing to be re-

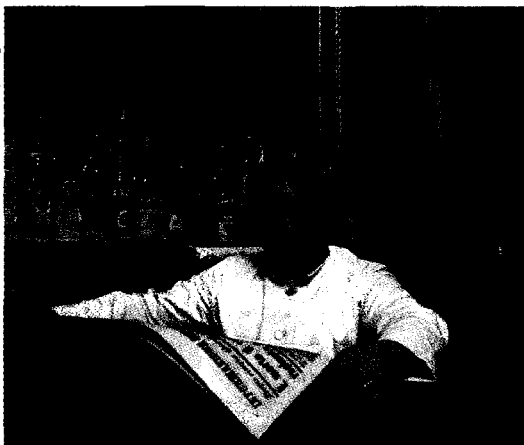
built after the war—not houses! And that was right." Arturo Toscanini, almost eighty, conducted the opening symphonic concert, on May 11, 1946. Staged opera returned on December 26, 1946. The opera was Verdi's *Nabucco*, and no wonder: "Va, pensiero," the chorus of the Israelites under Babylonian oppression, was adopted in 1842, as of its first hearing, as the de facto anthem of a unified Italy that at the time was still a dream.

CHRONICLES OF greatness are often told as fables of manifest destiny, but the curious mind detects no inevitability in La Scala's current eminence. The art we know as opera was born elsewhere: in aristocratic Florence, on the eve of the seventeenth century, in an attempt to revive the spirit of Greek drama as it was then imperfectly understood. Not until 1637

did the world see its first public opera house, and that was in Venice. By August 3, 1778, when La Scala opened its doors, opera (Italian, Italian-inspired, or in regional variants, notably French) had carried its banner all through the courts and cities of Europe, as far as St. Petersburg, London, and even out-of-the-way Stockholm. Before La Scala, Milan had the illustrious Regio Ducal Teatro, which in the early 1770s thrilled to the triumphs of the prodigy Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

But in 1776 the Regio Ducal burned down, and the architect Giuseppe Piermarini received the commission to build a new theater on the site of the demolished church Santa Maria alla Scala. The city being under Austrian rule, the venture required the blessing of Empress Maria Theresa. She gave it, and also donated the land. The noble box owners sent Piermarini back to the drawing board over the matter of the façade: that cheerless pediment and portico (redesigned five times) were concessions to their taste for the ostentatious—a taste also reflected in the opening production, a thirty-eight-scene extravaganza called *L'Europa riconosciuta*, with music by the now unjustly notorious Antonio Salieri.

The great composers of the nineteenth century all came through La Scala, where they were spared nothing. Consider Vincenzo Bellini, whose *Norma* (1831) stands as one of the supreme achievements



of bel canto. The opera's premiere, on December 26, the opening night of the Carnival season, was a fiasco. Bellini suspected, not without reason, a cabal by a rival composer and his rich protectors; the second night was a success, and by the end of the season the opera had chalked up thirty-four performances.

And, once again, consider Verdi. It was at La Scala, under the impresario Bartolomeo Merelli, that he introduced his first opera (*Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, 1839, performed fourteen times), suffered his first flop (*Un Giorno di Regno*, 1840, canceled after a single performance), and experienced his first triumph (*Nabucco*, given its premiere in 1842 with sets borrowed from a ballet on the same theme, and then immediately revived with new sets for a run of fifty-seven performances). Yet a few seasons after, just as he was coming into his own, Verdi grew so disgusted with Merelli's productions, penny-pinching, and shady deals—not to mention the capricious tastes of the local audience—that he wanted nothing more to do with La Scala. He stayed away for twenty years. His operas were still produced there, eventually even under his own direction, but not until a benign conspiracy coaxed him out of retirement for his final, Shakespearean masterpieces, *Otello* (1887, with Toscanini, at the age of nineteen, playing second cello) and *Falstaff* (1893), was the house again granted the honor of his world premieres. Having lapsed into provincialism during the long years of the estrangement, La Scala glittered once more, briefly.

Toscanini, appointed artistic director in 1898, recaptured the international standard, reigning like an angry god. He whipped the orchestra into shape, challenged the conservative audience with such advanced foreign composers as Wagner (on opening night—a provocation!) and Debussy, in time moved the orchestra from the auditorium's floor level into a pit, as Wagner had done and Verdi wanted to do, and fought twenty years to expropriate the theater from private ownership.

Still, not even Toscanini always got his way. Abhorring the idea that opera should be facile entertainment, Toscanini had no tolerance for encores. The rowdies continued to clamor for them all the same. At one performance of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, in 1903, after "È scherzo od è follia," such pan-

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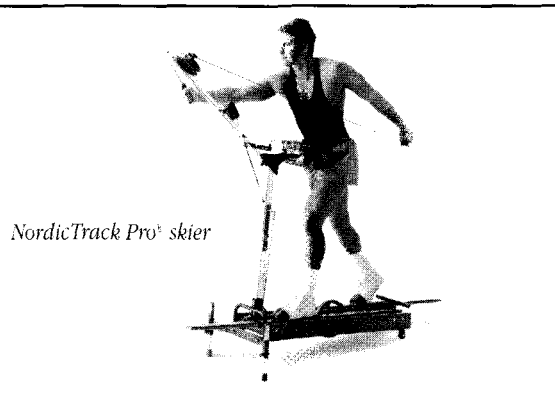
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Send your solved "Wrap Session" (page 153) to: *The Atlantic Monthly*, December Puzzler Contest, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116. *The Atlantic* will randomly draw three names from among all correct entries received by December 14. The winners' names will be published in the February issue. In addition, each of the winners may choose two cryptic crossword books from The Crossword Bookstore.

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"Land for Peace"

Can it solve the problems of the Middle East?

Many believe that the "land for peace" formula will solve the long-simmering problems of the Middle East. They think that peace would soon come to this troubled region if only Israel surrendered Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), Gaza and the Golan Heights to the Arabs.

What are the facts?

A totally new concept. The concept of "land for peace" is a totally new one in the history of the world. It was formulated for one specific purpose only, namely to persuade and pressure Israel to give up territories that it has administered since the Six-Day War of 1967. By its victory in that war, Israel wound up in possession of these territories. Contrary to what many are led to believe, the "West Bank," the focus of today's attention, had never been part of any Arab country. It was part of Palestine, a territorial unit that, by the Mandate of the League of Nations and in line with the Balfour Declaration, had been designated as a national home for the Jewish people.

Thus, while the concept of "land for peace" is a brand-new one, the concept that to the victor belong the spoils is as old as history itself. Our own country, of course, following its Manifest Destiny, has benefited greatly and has consolidated its territory by applying this motto. But Israel followed a different path. From the day of victory in 1967, it waited for an offer of peace from the Arabs. But that offer never came. **Should be 2-way street.** In 1977, President Sadat of Egypt traveled to Jerusalem and presented a peace plan to the Israeli government. The Israelis eagerly embraced his suggestion. In exchange for peace and normalization of relations with its neighbor, Israel returned to Egypt the vast Sinai peninsula, together with the city of Yamit; some of the most advanced military installations in the

world; the port and naval installation of Sharm-el-Sheik, and the oil fields that Israel had developed. And, of course, Israel also gave up the natural buffer against aggression that the Suez Canal and the strategic depth of the Sinai itself provided. It was a first in history. Never before in the chronicle of mankind had the victor returned conquered territory to the vanquished in order to attain peace.

One would expect that the concept of "land for peace" would work both ways. After all, should not the Arabs also make some territorial sacrifices for peace? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Every inch of land held by the

"A new idea, perhaps even a good one...but it needs to work both ways to be valid and effective."

Arabs is considered "holy Arab soil" and its possession by the "infidels" (Christians or Jews) is inadmissible. No

compromise, no concession is ever possible. **Conflict is with Arab nations.** The "land for peace" formulation is now applied mostly to Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank"), the Gaza region and the Golan Heights. Israel's foes, but also some of its friends, urge Israel to yield these regions to the Arabs, in exchange for "peace." But no peace will come about by Israel's giving up these areas of vital strategic importance to those who are its sworn enemies and who have declared over and over again that they wish to use these lands as their launching pad for the final attempt at the destruction of Israel. The conflict in the area is not only between Israel and the Palestinians. It is first of all between Israel and the Arab nations. With the single exception of Egypt, virtually all of them are still in a state of war with Israel.

To none of the Arab countries has the possibility ever occurred of *their* trading land for peace, for instance yielding the "West Bank", Gaza and the Golan Heights to Israel for the sake of peace. There isn't even a gesture of accommodation, such as a lifting of the Arab economic boycott against Israel, an apology for the odious slander that Zionism is Racism, or a discontinuation of the yearly charade in the United Nations, in which the Arab states attempt to expel Israel from that body. For the victor to yield land for peace to the vanquished is a new idea—who knows, it might even be a good one. But it surely would have to work both ways in order to be valid and effective.

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demonium ensued that the maestro could not proceed; he threw down his baton and left the theater.

EVERYWHERE one turns, captivating lore cries out for demystification. What, one may wonder, makes this house great? Tradition? The La Scala of 1992 is in large part new, scarcely a half century old. (At fifty-one, Muti is older than the podium on which he stands.) Acoustically, La Scala replicates the house as Toscanini rebuilt it, not the configuration that Donizetti or Bellini or Rossini or Verdi knew. The sound flatters neither the singers nor the orchestra; it is truthful, favorable to drama, no subject for rhapsody.

And what special authority can La Scala claim even on the operas created here? The company has not held on to its classics as ballet companies do, handing them down from generation to generation in self-perpetuating schools. The repertoire is too large for that, and the season at La Scala is too short: these days fewer than a dozen operas are presented, in partly overlapping runs of roughly six to twelve performances. Casts are assembled opera by opera; there is no steady ensemble. Ages can pass between revivals of the most indispensable works. Two seasons ago, when Muti brought back *La Traviata* in triumph after no less than forty days of musical rehearsals with a cast of unknowns, it had been off the boards at La Scala for a quarter of a century, ever since Herbert von Karajan and Mirella Freni had had to be escorted out a side door by the police to evade the wrath of the Furies of the top gallery.

Such artists cannot have deserved this. Still, that improbable fiasco reflects, in its twisted way, the civic pride Milan invests in La Scala—a pride that also swells the breasts of the chorus, the orchestra, and every employee of the house. Such pride, it must be said, is easier to maintain than the standards that justify it. The starry-eyed may like to think of La Scala as a temple, inviolate, lit for the ages by one steady flame. It is in fact a backdrop of chaos against which, from time to time, great deeds of artistry are performed. The tradition of La Scala, in Toscanini's age and again in Muti's, is no bag of tried and true stylistic tricks but instead artistic conscience—the will, the imagination, and the hard work to resist the deadening gravitational pull of routine. □



Recognition Humor

Seinfeld shows why television is today's best medium for comedy

by Francis Davis

THOSE OF US who are inclined to feel guilty about watching too much television are sometimes startled to realize that we actually *watch* very little. We eat dinner and do the dishes, catch up on our reading, have friends over or chat with them on the telephone, and generally go about our lives with the TV on in the background. In its infancy television was advertised as radio with pictures, and the fact that many of us still tend to use it that way helps to explain the enduring popularity of news and talk shows, soap operas, sketch humor, and situa-

tion comedies—formats in which what we hear is at least as important as what we see.

What's wrong with television is demonstrated by examining what I've just named as its strengths: newspapers remain a more dependable source of information, soap operas are an inducement to sloth (the least scintillating of the Seven Deadly Sins), and anybody in his right mind would prefer the company of his own friends (or solitude) to that of the celebrities welcomed by Arsenio or Leno or of the abuse victims exhibited by Oprah, Phil, and Sally

Jesse. Comedy, on the other hand, is something television now does better than any other medium, including the movies. Before arguing the contrary, recall the inspired sketches performed by such comics as Bill Murray, Eddie Murphy, Martin Short, Rick Moranis, and the late John Belushi as members of TV ensembles. Then take a look at their movies, which almost without exception have been imbecilic.

The failure of these transplants (and of Damon Wayans, who was nothing short of brilliant on TV's *In Living Color* but just annoying in last summer's *Mo' Money*) can be rationalized by observing that it's one thing to sustain a comic conceit for five minutes and quite another to try to sustain one for two hours. But that hardly explains the adolescent excess of most recent Hollywood comedies. What might is that only teenagers regularly attend the movies anymore—and only they spend much money at the candy counter, where theater operators make their profits. Television, although also guilty of aiming low, at least includes in its target audience adults forced by parenthood or heavy work loads into becoming stay-at-homes.

Like TV's sketch comedians, its sitcom auteurs have floundered in attempting to master longer narrative forms. I wasn't among the many moviegoers infatuated with James L. Brooks's *Broadcast News*, which struck me as a stretched-out and only slightly updated episode of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, one of the sitcoms for which Brooks was co-executive producer. Garry Marshall's *Pretty Woman* and *Frankie and Johnny* were more "adult" than his *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley*, but not necessarily more profound or even funnier.

Dark humor never has been television's strong suit (don't tell me about *Twin Peaks*); the medium offers nothing to compare to Robert Altman's *The Player*, Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth*, or John Boskovich's *Without You I'm Nothing* (a vehicle for Sandra Bernhard, herself largely a creature of TV). But the best sitcoms now regularly provide the sort of literate, unequivocal humor for which we used to depend on the movies. Some of TV's sorriest hacks, taking consolation from the fact that Shakespeare wrote for the masses, argue that if he were alive today he, too, would be writing for TV. (Writing

THE RASCAL KING

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
JAMES MICHAEL CURLEY (1874-1958)



Photo courtesy of the College of Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

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JACK BEATTY

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what? *Prospero's Island*? *Fresh Prince of Denmark*? *Polonius Knows Best*?) This is extremely doubtful. I do think, though, that S. J. Perelman, the screenwriter for many Marx Brothers movies, would today be writing sitcoms. So would Preston Sturges and the team of Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, if only because now the movies probably could not accommodate them. And possibly Ring Lardner and Dorothy Parker would too.

TYPICALLY set in the home or the workplace, the half-hour sitcom has evolved into our comedy of manners, its prevalent theme being how the people closest to us can drive us crazy. Because those who work in TV (and those who write about it for daily newspapers) are painfully aware of occupying a low cultural rung, TV is a medium in which artistic aspiration often passes for artistic achievement, and in which self-congratulatory liberalism regularly passes for biting social satire. This explains why *All in the Family* and *M*A*S*H* were overpraised in the 1970s and why *Designing Women* and *Murphy Brown* are overpraised now. The best sitcoms seldom tackle big issues except as little disturbances. In the wittiest of the current crop—*Coach*, *Roseanne*, *Roc*, *The Simpsons*, and, on cable, *Dream On* and *The Larry Sanders Show*—the biggest laughs derive not from predictable zingers but from the characters' often nettled takes on one another and on the mundane stuff of life in general. In this regard the funniest and best-written of all current shows might be *Seinfeld*, an NBC sitcom now in its third season, starring Jerry Seinfeld as a standup comedian, also his identity in real life.

Although shot in Hollywood, *Seinfeld* is set mostly in the title character's apartment on New York's Upper West Side, with one or two scenes in each episode taking place in a nondescript coffee shop similar to that on almost any Manhattan street corner. The coffee shop is the equivalent of the family dinner table in *Father Knows Best* or *Leave It to Beaver* for Seinfeld and his surrogate family of thirtysomethings, which consists of his ex-girlfriend, Elaine Benes (Julia Louis-Dreyfus), his best friend, George Costanza (Jason Alexander), and Jerry's across-the-hall neighbor, a hipster doofus known simply as Kramer (Michael Richards). *Sein-*

feld is the only show for which I could imagine the novelist Nicholson Baker someday writing a script; a lunch hour highlighted by an escalator ride (the subject of Baker's *The Mezzanine*) wouldn't be a stretch for a series that has already devoted one entire half-hour episode to waiting for a table in a Chinese restaurant and another to an attempt, by Seinfeld and his companions, to remember on which level of a New Jersey shopping-mall parking lot they left their car.

So much in *Seinfeld* is new to TV, beginning with its acknowledgment of the absurdity in the ordinary, that you tend to forget that it's based on a premise as old as the medium. As originally conceived by Seinfeld and Larry David, the show's head writer and executive producer, himself a failed standup, *Seinfeld* was strictly a vehicle for its star, whose monologues were to be juxtaposed with the (fictional) daily comings and goings that supplied the material for them. Sort of like George Burns or Jack Benny or, more recently, Garry Shandling, but minus their winking self-reflexiveness by virtue of showing Seinfeld delivering his material to a nightclub audience instead of directly to us. The problems caused by Seinfeld's inexperience as an actor are minimized because he more or less plays himself.

Although this founding premise hasn't been completely abandoned, Seinfeld's monologues have become shorter and fewer in number as the series has evolved. This is just as well, given the generic ring of his material. His specialty used to be called "observational" humor but has been renamed "recognition" humor, and the difference is more than semantic. Instead of generalizing from his own experience, as Mort Sahl, George Carlin, and Richard Pryor do and Lenny Bruce used to, Seinfeld, like most of his standup contemporaries, internalizes everybody's experience. The result is peevish bits about airports and dating and the candy we ate as children, which—timing and other tricks of the trade aside—you feel as though you could have come up with yourself.

FORTUNATELY, Seinfeld's monologues are woven into episodes vibrant with the sort of acute observation that his monologues fail to deliver. True, the show may have be-

gun as an outgrowth of Seinfeld's routines, but with the collaboration of Larry David it has gone far beyond that. Half a dozen writers have contributed funny scripts. The most hilarious episodes tend to be those written by David, frequently in collaboration with Seinfeld. Despite his failure on the comedy circuit, David remains something of a legend to his peers, less, one gathers, for his stinging material than for his absolute lack of showmanship (he was likely to throw down the microphone and stalk offstage if an audience was inattentive or didn't laugh in the right places—something all stand-up comedians have probably wanted to do). David has made the show's unofficial motto "No hugging, no learning," which capsulizes the difference between *Seinfeld* and those sitcoms in which the characters "grow," as a result of marriage, parenthood, new careers, or some other dramatic midlife passage. David once told an interviewer, "A lot of people don't understand that *Seinfeld* is a dark show. If you examine the premises, terrible things happen to people. They lose jobs; somebody breaks up with a stroke victim; somebody's told they need a nose job. That's my sensibility."

It's also the sensibility that pervades the show—a synthesis of angst and shtick best realized in the character of George Costanza. At face value George—short, pudgy, bald, and implicitly Jewish, despite his Italian surname—lives up to *New York Newsday's* description of him as "the most fully realized schlemiel in the history of television." Jason Alexander, a Tony Award winner for his role in *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*, and a crackerjack actor, transcends this stereotype by zeroing in on George's deviousness, his raging libido, and his volatile combination of arrogance and low self-esteem. (Alexander admits that his interpretation of George is based in large part on Larry David.) In his own way George is as vain as he is needy. His first reaction on hearing that a bulimic woman with whom he has recently been intimate has missed her period, probably owing to a defective condom, is to shout, "I did it! My boys can swim!"

It tells you everything you need to know about George's underdeveloped inner life to learn that he has a favorite explorer (De Soto, if memory serves) and that his favorite author is the sports

writer Mike Lupica. George is tight with a dollar, a trait understood to pre-date his having lost his job as a real-estate broker because he tried to poison his boss. (The character Elaine found him a job at the publishing company where she works as a reader, but he was fired for having desktop sex with a cleaning woman; the sight of her vacuuming turned him on—which, given that he says his mother reminds him of Hazel, the sitcom maid played by Shirley Booth, provides food for thought.) "It's like going to a prostitute," he tells Elaine, explaining why he drives around looking for a parking space instead of just pulling into a lot. "Why should I pay when, if I apply myself, maybe I can get it for free?" Every word out of George's mouth is raw material for Freudian analysis, but never more so than when he compares the "completely uninhibited" sex that Jerry is having with a new girlfriend to "going to the bathroom in front of lots of people and not caring." ("It's not like that at all," Seinfeld, a surprisingly effective straight man, exclaims after a stunned pause.)

Despite his image of himself as a lonely guy, George seems to have little difficulty in meeting women. His problem, for obvious reasons, is holding on to them. A single woman friend of mine recently told me that her new ambition in life is to not date George—the way she put it being an admission that she has already dated plenty of him and expects to date many more. After giving the matter some thought, she agreed that the self-satisfied character played by Seinfeld would be no bargain either.

Jerry's problem with women is that he's a perfectionist. The woman with whom he has been enjoying the completely uninhibited sex fails to measure up, because she's a bad actress who insists that he read lines with her between trips to the bedroom. Elaine is the only woman Jerry really seems to be comfortable around, but you can see why they were unsuccessful as a couple. A self-righteous nonsmoker unable to restrain herself whenever she spots a woman wearing animal fur, even if it's at a party, Elaine is as spoiled as Jerry. She's the one who breaks up with the stroke victim, a novelist thirty years her senior who suffers his stroke on the afternoon she was planning to tell him good-bye. Breaking up with him is one



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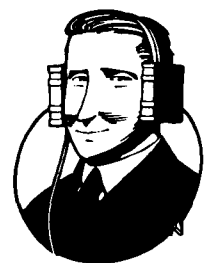
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thing, but she talks to him as if he were an infant, just because he's temporarily paralyzed and unable to feed himself.

TELEVISION used to work like this: Dad watched cop shows, Mom followed each new miniseries, and the entire family gathered around for sitcoms. This has changed, partly because American life-styles have and partly because cable and multiple household TVs have expanded our viewing options. Although *Seinfeld's* ratings have been mediocre, its demographics have been spectacular. Despite ranking only thirty-eighth among last season's regularly scheduled prime-time shows (and finishing second in its time slot so far this season to ABC's *Home Improvement*), it finished at number eleven for male viewers between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four—the audience most desired by advertisers. An NBC spokesperson I talked with called it “a network ad salesman's dream.”

This success is somewhat surprising in light of *Seinfeld's* regional and ethnic specificity. What do viewers beyond New York's five boroughs make of references to Ray's Pizza and Moe Ginsberg's? A knowledge of Jewish senior-citizen condo culture and Long Island families whose every conversation sounds like an argument was necessary in order to savor all the details in last season's single funniest episode (written by Larry David), in which Jerry and Elaine visited his parents in their Florida retirement community.

Despite *Seinfeld's* New York ambience, there are constant reminders that the action is unfolding on television (which is to say, nowhere in particular), not on West Eighty-first Street. In what is in fact one of Manhattan's best-integrated neighborhoods, the show's regulars cross paths with few people of color not in menial service positions. The only homeless person they encounter is George and Jerry's old high school gym teacher, now living on the steps of the Forty-second Street library. Of Jerry's friends, only Elaine has a visible means of income. Despite his unemployment, George doesn't seem to be hurting. Jerry, who seems to have as much free time on his hands as Ozzie Nelson used to, is never shown at his computer working on his gags. Although he's a big name on the comedy circuit and has even been on the

Tonight show, he doesn't pal around with anybody else in show business.

Where *Seinfeld* achieves the ring of authenticity is in its characters, the likes of whom have never before been seen on television. Insofar as there is such a thing as a typical *Seinfeld* plot, it involves a character who tries unsuccessfully to keep a secret or to avoid hurting somebody else's feelings by telling the truth. These are people who can't keep anything to themselves—the sort of people we all know, whose irreverence we might admire but who we sometimes wish would just grow up. Garry Marshall, presumably thinking of his own *Fonzie*, *Mork* and *Mindy*, and *Laverne* and *Shirley*, once said that the secret of a successful sitcom is creating characters whom viewers will be happy to welcome into their living rooms week after week. Not necessarily. *Seinfeld* is a sitcom (like *The Honeymooners*, come to think of it) that presents us with characters we might wish to keep our distance from in real life, but whose misadventures we delight in following from week to week on TV.

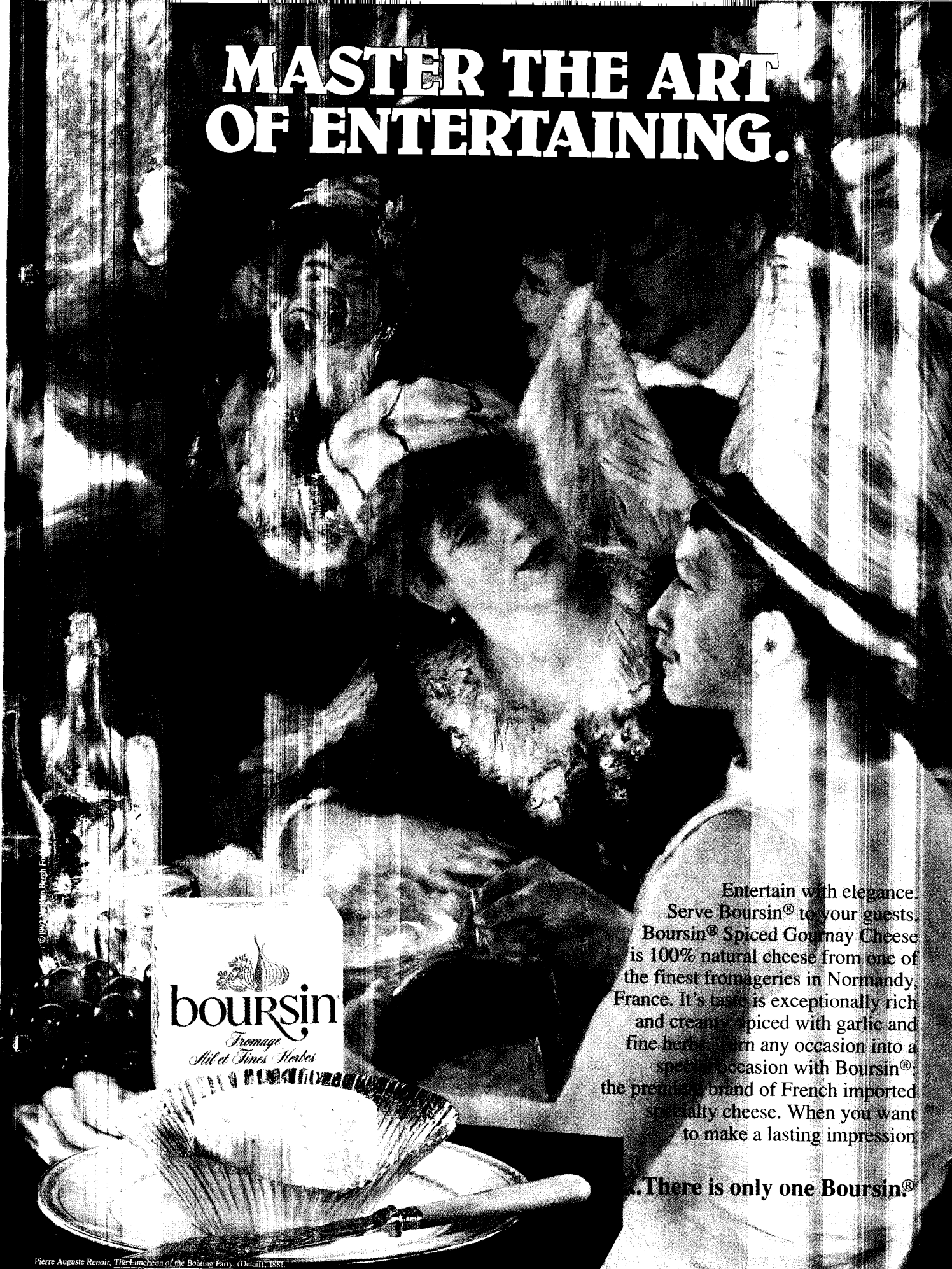
IS *SEINFELD* a preview of sitcoms to come or an evolutionary dead end? Probably the latter, if only because this is a show whose formula even its creators would be hard pressed to reproduce. It's sitcom stripped to its essentials, with any and all situations tangential to character quirks—the ultimate source of comedy in most shows anyway. *All in the Family* spawned *The Jeffersons* (Archie Bunker upscale and black) and *Maude* (Archie female and liberal). *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* spawned *Rhoda* and *Phyllis* (also about single women making it on their own) and contributed to the gene pool for *WKRP in Cincinnati* (also about people in broadcasting, just like Mary and Ted and Lou). What would be the point of another sitcom about an unmarried standup and his friends, or of a spinoff for Kramer, George, or Elaine? The only one of this season's new sitcoms arguably influenced by *Seinfeld's* deliberately prosaic style of humor is *Mad About You*, the show that now follows it Wednesday nights on NBC. *Mad About You* is similar to *Seinfeld* in that it, too, stars a standup comedian, in this case Paul Reiser. *Entertainment Weekly* described it as “*Seinfeld* gets married.” But it's finally another of those shows about a mismatched couple, a formula

long ago perfected by *Cheers* and also copied this season by *Hearts Afire* and *Love & War*.

Seinfeld, meanwhile, has been moving in unpromising directions, beginning with a two-parter broadcast last summer in which George and Jerry find themselves in Hollywood trying to free Kramer, who has been apprehended under suspicion of being a serial killer. (These episodes were written by Larry Charles, the show's supervising producer and its most prolific scriptwriter, aside from David and Seinfeld.) Why was it necessary to transport the characters to the West Coast? Last season the writers would have built an entire episode around making it to the airport in time. There were distracting cameos by Fred Savage, of *The Wonder Years*, George Wendt, of *Cheers*, and Corbin Bernsen, of *L.A. Law*. This season there have been continuing episodes, an odd twist for a show whose signatures have been its sense of day-to-dayness and recurring gags that sometimes move the plot along and sometimes don't. In one of last season's episodes Jerry and Elaine started sleeping together again. By the next episode they were back to being just friends, with no explanation of what had happened to change their minds in between. It didn't matter, because each episode was such a brilliant non sequitur. There has been too much of Kramer, a one-dimensional character whose problems with gravity used to provide just the right amount of physical humor to this intensely verbal show.

The Hollywood episodes and a running plot line in which Jerry and George negotiate with NBC for a show much like the one we're watching—about “nothing,” as George describes it—might prove to be ominous in light of a remark that Seinfeld made to *TV Guide* earlier this year. He said that when he wearies of doing the show, he'll write a final episode in which “my character will get a TV show and have to move to Los Angeles.” In other words, *Seinfeld* isn't about “nothing” anymore. It's increasingly about itself. This cute touch could mean that Seinfeld and the show's other writers, including David, are running out of ideas. We'll have to wait and see. In the meantime, barring an unlikely outbreak of hugging and learning, this remains one of the few shows worth making it a point not just to turn on but to stop everything to watch. □

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Imperishable Wine

The tempered virtues of Madeira

by Corby Kummer

I LIKE SWEET wines. In this my taste corresponds to that of the ever-increasing numbers of Americans who are buying dessert wines. They have discovered a rich variety of flavors that can either accompany dessert or take its place, in wines that contain half the alcohol of liqueur. They also frequently choose to forgo any other wine with dinner and save their alcohol for after the main part of the meal—which is where I part company with them.

In last December's *Atlantic* I wrote about port. Lately I have been exploring Madeira, another fortified wine that is far less well known than port or sherry as an apertif or after-dinner wine and also one much better suited to pairing with a variety of first courses and desserts. Too, its aftereffects seem less pronounced than those of port. If people know Madeira at all, it is as an ingredient in sauces, stuffings, or vegetable dishes—a cooking wine that

isn't very pleasant to drink—or as the subject of the genteelly lecherous "Have Some Madeira, M'Dear," written by the English team of Flanders and Swann, whose *At the Drop of a Hat* revues were popular in the late fifties and the sixties. Neither image of Madeira is a true one.

The California product sold as Madeira has an offensive, insistent odor, like winy prune juice spilled on a counter and left in the sun. Real Madeira, from the island 400 miles west of Morocco, is in fact heated before it is bottled—strange for a wine—but it has a fresh, lively nose. That very unusual heating is related to the second misimpression—that Madeira, like port, is an English taste. Madeira was made great by its travels to America, and was uniquely appreciated by Americans, including the framers of the Constitution. It is said that Madeira was used to toast the Declaration of Independence.

Madeira won the hearts of Colonial Americans by default, because an English royal decree of 1665 barred the export of European goods to the colonies except through British ports and on British ships—meaning that virtually all wines were highly taxed. But the Portuguese "province" of Madeira (today the island is an autonomous region of Portugal) was allowed to trade directly with the American Colonies and British holdings in the Caribbean, because England's King Charles II was married to the Portuguese infanta. Its wine thus became standard in America.

By accident, the shipping itself changed Madeira from a very good wine, comparable to many French reds, into a great one. Ships carrying Madeira bound for the colonies traveled an equatorial route to the Caribbean islands. The long exposure to heat would ordinarily be ruinous to wine, but buyers and shippers alike found that they actually preferred the baked Madeira to the raw. They liked it so much, in fact, that soon all Madeira was subjected to a hot sea voyage before it was sold. Wine shipped to and aged in America would travel back to England, where in the eighteenth century the best Madeira was called "American." Throughout the nineteenth century—by the beginning of which all Madeira was fortified so that it would keep longer—and even into the twentieth, shippers would send Madeira round-trip along the Equator to India simply to bake it twice. This was just for the most demanding customers: winemakers had long ago learned how to heat the wine on the island to achieve the same effect.

This preference for cooked wine was not so peculiar. Heating sugar (and protein) changes and usually improves flavor. The flavor of caramelized sugar is what we enjoy in the burnt edges of grilled vegetables and in the crackling glaze of crème brûlée. Harold McGee, in *The Curious Cook*, his always interesting book of essays, describes the hundreds of flavor compounds produced by the simple act of heating sugar, and says that ordinary ripening produces a good number of them in fruit. Many sweet wines, such as French sauternes and Italian Vin Santo (which Tuscan families heated and cooled as it aged by storing it under the eaves, long before Charles II and his decree led to the discovery that Madeira improves

when heated), acquire depth from a slow drying of the grapes not quite to the raisin stage. The grapes for Madeira are not dried at all; they are made into wine almost as soon as they are picked. But the wine acquires a powerful charge of flavor with heating—done in casks or vats in sauna-like rooms that slowly reach a temperature of 113° Fahrenheit and then slowly cool. It's easy to see why the French built sautes around Madeira, and why a small amount contributes so much to many recipes: the caramelized sugar is like that in a reduced stock or meat glaze, with the sweet-acid balance and fruit unique to a great wine.

Madeira remained popular here until Prohibition, which devastated an island economy that for more than two centuries had relied on American Madeira consumption. Madeira had just recovered from two blights—oidium, a mildew that struck in 1852, and phylloxera, a louse that wiped out most European vineyards and then appeared in Madeira in 1872. (This year phylloxera has plagued California vintners.) But Madeira never fully recovered from Prohibition. Nancy Peach, a representative of the Madeira Wine Company, a consortium of British Madeira houses, has visited the island and calls the industry a "mad marketing mess." Port and sherry long ago surpassed Madeira in sales and esteem, and although Madeira is more expensive to produce than either one, it remains undervalued. Robert Finigan, in his *Essentials of Wine*, calls it "one of the most overlooked fine wines of the world."

Madeira is also usually called indestructible, because whatever damage people can do to other wines by improperly storing them in warm or humid places has already been done to Madeira. A simple airing of any Madeira for a day or two will generally bring it to exactly the state at which the shipper bottled it and meant it to be drunk, and it lasts virtually forever.

THE BEST Madeira you can usually find in a wine shop is called rainwater. Despite the pleasant name, rainwater is a thin, dull blend said to be named for the accidental entry of rain into unplugged cask bung-holes; the softness of the wine pleased its eighteenth-century Virginia recipient. The blend no longer features rainwater, but neither does it feature any of

the four "noble" grapes that produce the only Madeira worth drinking. (It's fine for cooking, though; Blandy's packages a comparatively full, sweet rainwater in little bottles that hold nearly a cup, for people who want to buy just enough wine for a recipe.) The four noble grapes define four quite different styles of Madeira, and you shouldn't bother buying a bottle unless the grape variety is prominently displayed on the label.

Until very recently shippers have been able to use the name of one of the noble grapes to refer to the style, even if the principal component was an impostor called Tinta Negra Mole, a prolific "soft black" grape related to Pinot Noir which is said to mimic each of the four noble grapes when grown at the proper altitude. This is quite a trick, considering that the four varieties are not black but white, although the final wine is a caramel color. Tinta Negra Mole has its defenders, but I find it unmistakable, whatever the label says. Just when the wine should become interesting on the tongue, it dulls out, wiping away initial promise.

Fortunately, the European Community now requires any maker that names one of the four varieties on the label to make at least 85 percent of the wine from that grape. The rule became binding only this year (Portugal fully enters the EC next year), so beware of varietal names written small on older labels, which can mean "in the style of."

The noble grapes produce honed wines, and none is sharper than Sercial, the driest of the four and the one grown highest on the island, where the grapes will develop the least sugar before being harvested. Further, the grapes are "fermented dry," meaning that all their sugar is allowed to turn to alcohol before neutral grape spirits, which stop fermentation, are added. Anyone who likes fino or Dry Sack or other dry sherries will enjoy the astringent refinement of Sercial, which has a sherry-like aroma and leaves tastes of both caramel and lemon on the tongue. Like dry sherry, Sercial has classically been served with turtle and other clear soups, although it is equally good with salty appetizers such as olives and prosciutto.

Verdelho is the next driest. I wasn't captivated by either of the Verdelhos I tasted recently, because I found them

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General Manager

verging on the butterscotch and toffee of fuller styles of Madeira but lacking the edge of Sercial. Verdelho would go well with a winter soup, especially one with a ham bone and lentils, but of the four it seems the least irreplaceable.

Bual is where Madeira begins to show its greatness. Some believe, very plausibly, that Bual is the finest of all Madeiras. It most clearly demonstrates the "thrilling balance of sweetness and acidity" in Madeira which the writer Barbara Ensrud describes in her *Wine With Food*. I can't imagine tiring of Bual, because it provides a constant tension between citrus and a head-filling sweetness, with neither ever gaining the upper hand. I was lucky enough to taste a 1920 Blandy's Bual, which smelled faintly of coffee and was superb, with a broad but focused range of flavors. I would happily renounce all other Madeira to be assured a constant supply of that 1920 Bual. A bottle costs about \$150—quite reasonable considering how notable and unusual the wine is and the fact that it is usually drunk one modest glass at a time, and especially reasonable by comparison with vintage port. If you can't find a range of Madeiras at your local wine shop, you can call Bart Broadbent, who distributes the products of the Madeira Wine Company; the number is 415-331-7656.

Bual best illustrates why Madeira is so well suited to food: it cleanses and refreshes the palate, as wines meant to be drunk with food always do but sweet wines generally don't. David Rosengarten and Joshua Wesson, who write the newsletter *Wine & Food Companion*, think that Bual and freshly roasted almonds are a great match; Nancy Peach would like to pair it with pineapple upside-down cake. Their suggested matches highlight the versatility of Bual, a refined wine with clear structure which can be served as an aperitif or with dessert. I think that its bracing sweetness is better suited to dessert.

MALMSEY is the sweetest and lushest Madeira, with the weight of port in the mouth and enough heft almost to banish thoughts of food pairings. In the odd language of Madeira, Malmsey is "superlative rich," Bual "medium rich," Verdelho "half dry," and Sercial "dry." This unedifying terminology is remi-

niscient of "super-colossal" olives, and on a label should be suspected of camouflaging the actual grape used. "Malmsey" is itself a corruption of "Monemvasia," the town in the Peloponnesus where the grape variety originated; other members of the same family include the Italian Malvasia and the French Malvoisie. Amazingly, even the velvety Malmsey leaves a slight acidity rather than sweetness in the mouth. The palate-covering richness but cleansing acidity of Malmsey leads to its frequent pairing with dense desserts like dark-chocolate cake and chocolate truffles. Barbara Ensrud, who prefers Malmsey alone, says nonetheless that it is "absolutely stunning with plain, un-iced angel food cake."

Although I'm less taken with Malmsey on its own than Bual on its own (and Bual lends itself to more kinds of food), I did admire a Miles ten-year-old Malmsey, with a toffee sweetness and a lightly acid finish. Like all port except vintage port, all Madeira is blended. Current marketing strategy seems to involve naming blends for the youngest wines in them; the youngest permitted to be sold using noble grapes is five years old. I found Cossart's five-year-old Malmsey overpoweringly sweet, like cough medicine, and Blandy's fifteen-year-old Malmsey less interesting than its ten-year-old. (These are two of a number of English-owned houses on the island; as a rule the Portuguese Madeira houses concentrate on Sercial and Verdelho, and the English on Bual and Malmsey, although they all make each style.) A ten-year-old Malmsey is the best introduction for anyone who wants to know why Madeira holds its own against port.

Even if I favor Bual, only Malmsey is suited to the pairing that is dearest to my heart, and one I never expected would work brilliantly: with espresso. Italians have long "corrected" espresso by adding grappa and other distilled liqueurs, whose acerbic force makes each liquid even more potent. The big block of flavor in Malmsey brings out the best coffee flavors in espresso, which in turn makes Malmsey seem a livelier, more complex wine. And at the end a delicious, reviving acidity lingers in the mouth. If you've been committing the sin of dropping a lemon peel into a cup of espresso, try a shot of Malmsey instead. □

Books

Capitalism Versus Conservatism

by Glenn Tinder

DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD
The Challenge
to the Christian Capitalist
by Richard John Neuhaus.
Doubleday, \$22.00.

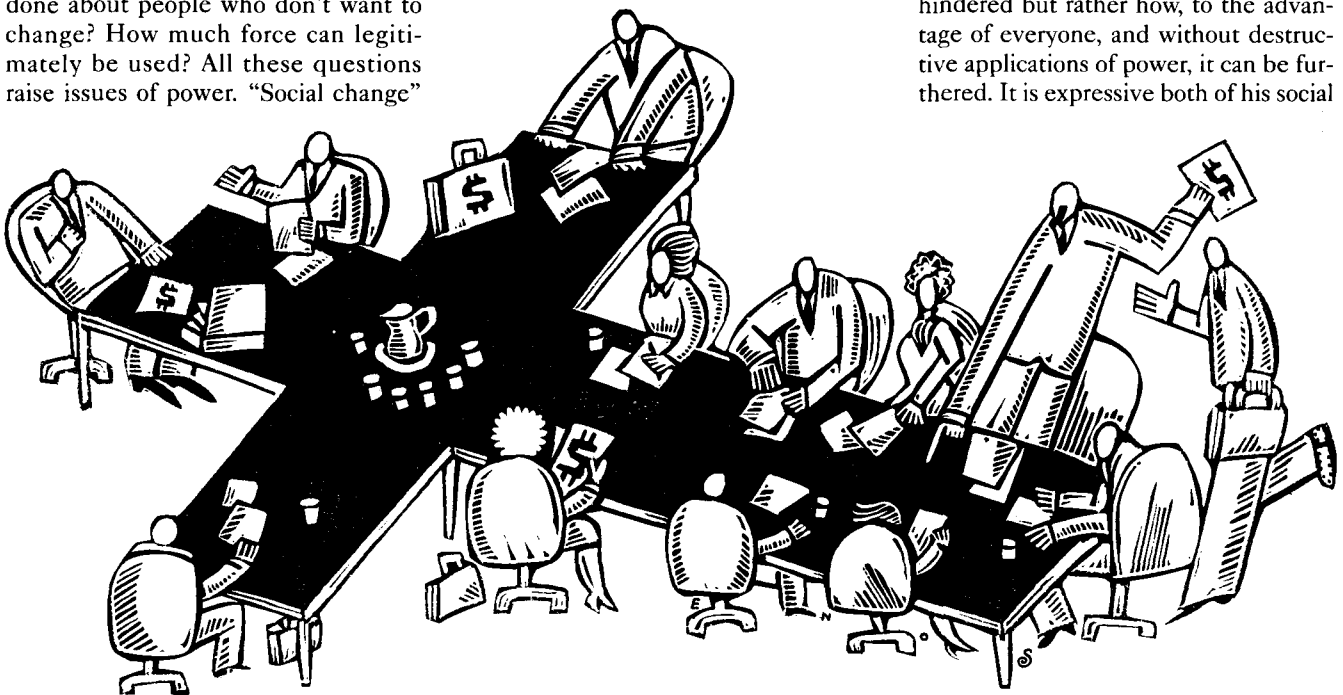
AMERICANS have seemingly decided that present national circumstances call for serious change. Both major-party presidential nominees at the outset of their campaigns made a vigorous effort to persuade voters of their commitment to change, and Ross Perot's fitful popularity was apparently due above all to the public conviction that he could be relied on, as President, not to leave things as they are. But social change is hardly a simple matter. How quickly can it occur? What direction should it take? Who answers these questions? The voters? Government experts? And finally, what should be done about people who don't want to change? How much force can legitimately be used? All these questions raise issues of power. "Social change"

probably has agreeable connotations for most people, and "power" disagreeable connotations. Yet social change, as ordinarily imagined by its protagonists, depends on power, and the more swift and sweeping the changes a society seeks, the more drastic and extensive is likely to be the power that has to be used. The project of transforming society completely implies totalitarian power.

Doing Well and Doing Good is interesting above all because of what it says, or implies, concerning change. This is odd in a way, because the author, a leading Christian controversialist, editor, and writer, is widely known as a neoconservative, which might be taken to mean that he wants to conserve what is established and is more or less opposed to change. In some ways Neuhaus (or, more formally, Father Neuhaus: having for many years been a politically active and highly articulate Lutheran pastor, he was recently received into the Catholic Church and shortly thereafter ordained as a priest) may fit the conservative mold. He is opposed to the redistribution of income and, although much concerned with the poor, is far less attached to the ideal of equality than to that of liberty; he refuses, for

example, to characterize Michael Milken's earnings—reportedly a million dollars a day for a period of more than a year—as inequitable. He is conservative above all, perhaps, in what is seemingly his major mission as a Christian writer: resisting the present-day movement in the churches to replace the traditional Christian proclamation with programs of social transformation.

Nonetheless, classifying Neuhaus as a conservative of any sort is at least misleading. He favors job training, unemployment insurance, active labor unions, and environmental legislation. In one short sentence he seems to accept unreservedly the New Deal understanding of the proper scope of public concerns. If I accurately interpret his views, he feels that everyone has a moral right to a job, though he doubts that this can be made a legal right. Neuhaus was for some years the pastor of an impoverished black church in Brooklyn, and he worked with Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil-rights movement. The breadth of sympathy and sensitivity to human need that one might expect in someone with that record are evident in his writings. As for social change, *Doing Well and Doing Good* can be read as an effort to show not how change can be halted or hindered but rather how, to the advantage of everyone, and without destructive applications of power, it can be furthered. It is expressive both of his social



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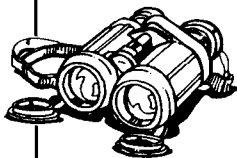


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sympathies and of his dissatisfaction with the status quo when he writes in another book he published this year, *America Against Itself: Moral Vision and the Public Order*, that

to resign ourselves to a permanent underclass that lives in abject dependency on the dole and is kept behind ever higher barricades in order to protect the rest of the population is, quite simply, morally unacceptable.

THE KEY CONCEPT in the book under review, I think it is fair to say, is freedom. The idea of seeking change through freedom can be contrasted with the mind-set that Neuhaus believes was instilled by reform movements of the nineteenth century: that progress is properly defined "in terms of the centralizing, rationalizing, professionalizing, and governmentalizing of social services." Although Neuhaus is not a doctrinaire opponent of all governmental activity, his basic principle is borrowed from the recent papal encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (on which his book is cast as a commentary): "the subjectivity of society." This means that society is composed of persons who, because they are persons, are subjects of action and not objects. By way of contrast it might be said that the *objectivity* of society was the basic principle assumed by Lenin and other communist leaders. The Pope's principle implies that social change cannot be beneficent unless it engages not only the consent but also the imagination, initiative, and vital cooperation of citizens. Hence the absolute necessity of freedom.

Neuhaus divides society into three main areas—political, cultural, and economic—and these, it might be said, are the principal spheres of freedom. The economic sphere is the main subject of *Doing Well and Doing Good*, which is thus a book concerned particularly with capitalism. The title, of course, simply expresses the familiar idea that those who do well, through achieving economic success, benefit everyone and thus do good.

How? Through Adam Smith's "invisible hand"? Neuhaus does not very explicitly invoke the natural harmonies of the market, although he can hardly avoid relying on them in considerable measure. His case for capitalism starts, apparently, with the assumption that its main alternative, socialism, has been so

thoroughly discredited by modern history as no longer to merit serious discussion. More specifically, his case for capitalism is seemingly in part the one made by Walter Lippmann in *The Good Society*—that a working economy is entirely beyond human comprehension and therefore beyond effective human governance. In the daily life of a free economy "billions of capitalist acts between consenting adults take place every day," Neuhaus writes. "Nobody understands it. Nobody can understand it." Equally important in his mind, however, is the belief that the only feasible answer to poverty, in the United States and in the world at large, lies in greatly increased productivity, and that this can come about only through capitalism. Resources for the production of wealth are primarily human, not natural; hence they are "only as limited as are human imagination, initiative, and creativity," which is to say that "we live in a world of unlimited resources." Finally, an important tenet in the case for capitalism is that work is a major expression of human creativity. It follows that human dignity is adequately maintained only where there is the utmost possible freedom to work in response to one's own inclinations and talents.

The obvious question is whether capitalism operates, or can operate, so beneficently. The author might answer this question by referring to his statement, on the first page, that his book is about "the moral challenge of living in a free society." He doesn't assume that capitalism necessarily works beneficently; he assumes only that it can—far more beneficently than any alternative system. How it works in fact will depend on how people respond to the challenge inherent in economic freedom, and that means not only how capitalists and workers respond but also how political and cultural leaders—lawmakers, writers, teachers, and pastors—respond. Beneficent capitalism depends on an appropriate juridical framework (one providing protection, for example, against severe economic hardship) and on moral teachers and exemplars. It might be said that Neuhaus appeals not so much to Adam Smith's principle that a wise and benevolent hand works invisibly in a market economy as to a less sweeping principle—that no benighted and malicious hand guides such an economy. This has a signal implication: capitalism does not rob us of our moral

freedom. Neuhaus particularly stresses the importance of action by private groups. This is often termed "the principle of subsidiarity," and it means, in Pope John Paul's words, that "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good." In sum, capitalism will be beneficent, furthering social harmony and progress, in its proper legal, moral, and cultural setting. To say this is clearly not to celebrate limitless *laissez-faire*.

IS IT STILL to place unwarranted faith in capitalism? Strong arguments that it is, arguments both empirical and theoretical, can readily be formulated. The empirical arguments might begin by saying simply, "Look around you!" To heed this injunction today in America is to see cities ravaged by drugs, violence, and destitution; communications media characterized conspicuously by their indifference to moral and cultural standards; advertising that from morning to night filters into every nook and cranny of daily existence, working ceaselessly (and surely not in vain) to persuade Americans that the goodness of life consists largely in things possessed; a pornography industry that makes its products available not just in out-of-the-way "adult" bookstores but in every video rental shop, at every large magazine stand, and often at your corner drugstore; an abortion industry that eliminates well over 1.5 million unborn children each year; a populace beguiled, if not wholly absorbed, by something Tocqueville saw everywhere in America and called "the passion for physical gratification"; families afflicted by a 50 percent divorce rate; a government so hamstrung by special interests as to be incapable of intelligent debate, let alone constructive action; and, finally, gross economic inequities, visible, for example, in the millions of dollars in annual salaries with which corporate executive officers reward themselves—often not for "doing well" as business leaders but in spite of doing very badly—while millions of their fellow countrymen live in conditions of squalor, economic insecurity, and physical danger so extreme as almost to match the

worst conditions that poverty has ever visited on human beings.

Can anyone claim that capitalism has little or nothing to do with such circumstances? On the contrary, a thousand lines of responsibility can easily be traced from capitalism to the present degradation of America. No doubt a more demanding legal, cultural, and moral framework would make an important difference. One is bound to wonder, nevertheless, whether the moral freedom offered by capitalism is as ample as is assumed in *Doing Well and Doing Good*. This very briefly summarizes the empirical argument against Neuhaus's appraisal of capitalism.

The theoretical argument, at its strongest, is basically theological. Neuhaus does not seem to take fully into account, even though he knows very well in principle, what religious writers sometimes refer to as the fallenness of the world. Even the best political and economic systems are far from matching the perfect harmony that in orthodox Christian thought is symbolized as the kingdom of God and comes only with the end of history. History itself is inconclusive if not tragic. Such a view is starkly represented in the image, contained in each of the synoptic Gospels, of the end of history as a time of catastrophe and unprecedented suffering. Can it be expected that capitalism, even though wisely restrained by law and morality, will greatly alleviate the pain and disorder inherent—at least according to orthodox Christian perceptions—in the human state? And, to ask a question that goes to the heart of Neuhaus's book, is it reasonable to anticipate that human beings can ever achieve a social order in which human interests are so perfectly reconciled that doing well and doing good are normally the same? The New Testament seems to say that doing good is not as easy as serving your own interest and sometimes involves the very opposite of doing well—that is, self-sacrifice.

IT WOULD BE wide of the mark to suggest that Neuhaus, an uncommonly discerning and well-informed writer, might be unaware of such arguments. But a reader may wish that he had faced them more squarely than he does. The phenomena of social and moral degeneration in present-day America are so numerous and glaring as to seem like signs of a declining civi-



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lization. Saint Augustine, living and writing amid the tumult of the final decades of the Roman Empire, set forth a vision of history that is readily understandable in our own times. Earthly societies come and go, according to Augustine, and all are more or less opposed to God, which is to say, to love, truth, and justice. It is hard to imagine Augustine coming as close as Neuhaus does to idealizing a particular earthly system such as capitalism. In a recent work, *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World*, Neuhaus argues eloquently for what is often called the "eschatological proviso," which means, very simply, the principle that no ideal societies will ever be found in history. It is a thoroughly Augustinian principle. What it requires, in the unassuming vocabulary Neuhaus uses to explain it, is merely that whenever we say yes to a social order, we must also say no. A reader is apt to feel that when Neuhaus discusses capitalism, his "no" is very muted.

A specific example may clarify this criticism. It is difficult to avoid the impression that many jobs in America are inherently stultifying, and that whereas a person of genius might perform them in a way that would render them interesting, a normal person cannot, and, moreover, that whereas a person of unusual ambition and talent would probably find a way of advancing beyond such jobs, many people are helplessly imprisoned by them. Neuhaus denies the validity of this impression when he argues (quoting a seventeenth-century Puritan preacher), picturesquely but not entirely convincingly, that "God loveth adverbs"—a way of claiming that it is usually a question not of *what* our jobs are but of *how* we do them. "The fault in most cases," he writes, "is not in our work but in ourselves." Perhaps that is so. If it is, however, the fault is merely that of lacking the exceptional gifts needed for escaping from vocational traps, set by capitalists, which snare millions of average men and women.

Doing Well and Doing Good is also vulnerable to criticism for the way the author handles, or rather neglects, the standard of equality. Capitalism surely entails great inequalities; it would not work unless there were glittering prizes for a minority but not for everyone. Perhaps capitalism provides public benefits so great that it is worth bearing with the inequalities it creates—an

Augustinian point! Aren't such inequalities nevertheless evil in themselves? Most of us have an intuitive sense that a system is inequitable when it allows some people to make in a year more money than many others can make in a lifetime. Is that a false intuition? I think Neuhaus might say that it is. But the idea of equality is very weighty, in both the Christian and Enlightenment traditions. It expresses a tenacious feeling that in spite of all manifest and measurable inequalities, somehow every human being is of absolute worth and in this crucial respect is equal to every other human being. What this means for social policy is hard to say. It must mean something, however, if it is true. And if capitalism flagrantly violates it, surely that marks a grave defect in capitalism, even if it is a defect inherent in the tragedy of history and humanly irremediable.

If Neuhaus had taken more seriously the standard of equality, he would have had also to take more seriously the idea of redistributing income—an idea he rather summarily dismisses. As already noted, he argues that poverty can be countered only by increased productivity. Aside from the ecological question of whether the earth can support the requisite expansion of productivity, there is a moral question, and it is connected with the standard of equality. If industrial production is vastly expanded in a country like the United States, with no redistribution of income, how will that affect the considerable numbers of people who already have ample wealth? Are we condemned, because it is impractical to pursue directly the goal of greater justice, to pursue instead the futile and demoralizing goal of ever-increasing material abundance? Many decks are already awash in pleasures and possessions. Doesn't the thought of a nation far wealthier than the United States today, but with comparable inequalities, suggest an image of fleets of ships foundering morally in oceans of superfluous wealth? To a greater degree than Neuhaus allows for, the redistribution of income (and, indeed, the whole idea of equality) is a moral, not merely an economic, issue.

THESE ARE perhaps the major criticisms that can be made of *Doing Well and Doing Good*. In spite of them it is a valuable book, above all because it provides an able and felicitous

exposition of a fundamental truth—a truth concerning change.

Social change that is comprehensively designed and enforced by human beings is not feasible. Ignoring the “subjectivity of society,” it destroys freedom and thus undercuts human dignity. Moreover, as shown in the history of socialism, it fails normally even to achieve its explicit goals. Those who insist that socialism (as opposed to social democracy) in some form will yet prove itself are like sleepers who have been pleasantly dreaming and now, suddenly startled into wakefulness by recent events in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, have turned over and are trying to pick up the old dream and get back to sleep. There are far more intellectuals among these would-be dreamers than one might expect. Neuhaus is not among them. He is trying to see what the world looks like to those who are fully awake, and he begins with the rather sensible proposition that we have no alternative to some form of capitalism. Equally basic in his mind, I believe, is the proposition that whatever we do, we must be respectful of freedom; if freedom is lost, then nothing of much substance can be gained. These two propositions hang together, of course, for capitalism is simply freedom in the economic sphere. However, freedom is not an end in itself—indeed, it does not in itself have any value at all. It is simply an indispensable prerequisite to living constructively in the world, which means improving society and rendering life more decent and just for everyone. To do that is the “challenge to the Christian capitalist” and to every capitalist. It is the challenge of using freedom to bring about historical progress.

This may be a simple idea, but it is not very commonly understood. Neither the Democrats, in their Kennedyesque fervor for “getting the country moving again” under governmental auspices, nor the Republicans, with their propensity for pouring scorn on government and uncritically celebrating free markets, show a clear understanding of it. To a remarkable extent it has come to be assumed that those who believe deeply in freedom and are wary of government are probably more or less indifferent to social change and social justice. But that doesn’t follow. People who are free normally want to do things that bring about change. And where

those who are free include not only capitalists but also moralists and social critics and workers able to organize for self-protection, and where government can influence the uses of freedom, social change may be in the direction of social justice. Many have become unconsciously committed to what might be called a politics of command: change must be centrally planned and governmentally mandated. Neuhaus stands for something unfortunately far more rare—a politics of hope.

Finally, it must be said that *Doing Well and Doing Good* is worthy of attention because the author, if sometimes mistaken, is invariably interesting. The book ranges widely. It contains, for example, as an introduction to the commentary on the Pope’s encyclical, an extended discussion of the authority of encyclicals and other papal pronouncements—a discussion that Catholics and non-Catholics alike will find illuminating. Also, the book is filled with perceptive and nicely phrased remarks on a variety of political issues. An example may serve as a fitting conclusion to this review: “One of the truly monumental human misfortunes of the last century,” Neuhaus writes, in a statement reflective of his whole outlook, “is that Marxism succeeded in presenting itself as the only intellectually respectable perspective by which modern societies could be subjected to critical judgment.” □

The Wrong Men

by Wendy Kaminer

IN SPITE OF INNOCENCE:
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in Capital Cases
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Hollywood staple. Yet a majority of Americans also support the death penalty, presumably in the belief that the average inmate on death row belongs there.

In Spite of Innocence painstakingly demonstrates that real people convicted of murder are sometimes as innocent as film heroes, if rarely as appealing. Michael Radelet, a professor of sociology at the University of Florida; Hugo Adam Bedau, a professor of philosophy at Tufts University; and the journalist Constance Putnam chronicle more than 400 wrongful capital convictions, from the early 1900s to the present. Most are murder convictions, but a few involve rape. (The Supreme Court invalidated the death penalty in rape cases in 1977.) Most vulnerable to being executed for rape were black men accused by white women.

The cases described here, in considerable detail, range from the notorious to the obscure. They include the case of the Scottsboro Boys, nine black men who "spent a total of 104 years in prison for a [rape] that never occurred," and the Randall Adams case, made famous by Errol Morris's documentary *The Thin Blue Line*. Adams, recently released from prison after twelve years, had been convicted of killing a police officer on the basis of perjured testimony, in a trial marked by prosecutorial misconduct and defense inexperience. In a less publicized, 1974 case Jerry Banks spent six years on death row for a murder conviction reflecting grossly incompetent defense counsel and the falsification of evidence by a sheriff's detective. In a 1956 case James Foster was convicted of murder on the basis of a mistaken eyewitness identification, which may have resulted from police failure to conduct a proper lineup. Foster spent two years on death row and was released only after the actual murderer confessed.

What went wrong in these cases? The authors point to perjured testimony by prosecution witnesses and mistaken eyewitness identifications as the most frequent causes of error. But probably the most disturbing cases, as they observe, are those involving shoddy or bad-faith police work, prosecutorial misconduct, and racism—all of which bring into question the integrity of the justice system itself.

The criminal-justice system delineated by the cases in this book is a system in which people are not proved

guilty of crimes so much as chosen to be found guilty: the police and prosecutors light upon a suspect because of prejudice or circumstances or in response to public pressure for a quick conviction. They interpret or distort evidence in a way that supports their case and suppress evidence against it. Of course, this is not necessarily typical of law-enforcement work, but there are too many documented cases of police and prosecutorial misconduct to dismiss it as a fluke. And after all, there is no reason to assume that police officers and district attorneys as a class are more honest than the rest of us.

Nor are they necessarily more competent. At best, the system described here is less malevolent than arbitrary. As the authors point out, it is "fickle good fortune rather than anything having to do with the rational workings of the criminal justice system" that eventually exonerates some people. In southern states, they note (quoting from a *National Law Journal* report), "justice in capital murder trials is more like a random flip of the coin than a delicate balancing of the scales." Contrary to what we want to believe about criminal justice, this is not a system in which character is fate.

Proponents of capital punishment vigorously question this critique, and many dismiss it as political. In fact, an earlier version of this study, published in the mid-1980s by Radelet and Bedau, generated an aggressive response from Edwin Meese's Department of Justice and exchanges of op-ed pieces and law-review articles. A 1986 Justice Department memo by the assistant attorney general Stephen J. Markman attacked Radelet and Bedau's findings by questioning their political sympathies. The authors discussed more than 300 cases, but the fact that they chose to include Sacco and Vanzetti, the Rosenbergs, and Bruno Hauptmann (none of these are much more than mentioned in the book), Markman wrote, "makes it clear that this 'study' is, more than the authors would admit, a polemical tract rather than a serious and fair-minded inquiry." Equally damning was the fact that the study had been funded partly by the Unitarian Universalist Society, which "has provided financial support to many liberal groups seeking to change national policies on social issues."

In addition to the authors' nefarious political ties, however, Markman addressed the substance of their study,

notably the assertion that the convictions they described were, in fact, wrongful. Readers can judge for themselves Radelet, Bedau, and Putnam's credibility; but their work is thoroughly documented, and 90 percent of the cases they report involve official acknowledgment of error.

A less frivolous line of attack is that these wrongful convictions are anomalies. The authors, however, contend that the cases they describe are typical of hundreds or perhaps thousands of others. Again, readers will be guided by their own instincts and experience in deciding whether this claim is true. The authors do suggest, persuasively, that coerced confessions are a particular problem in capital cases: people plead guilty out of fear of receiving the death penalty. They also point out that in questionable cases, investigations of guilt and innocence are rarely pursued after an execution has been carried out. Except for the occasional cause célèbre, like the Rosenberg case, people's cases die with them.

Finally, some statistical evidence indicates that capital punishment is not fairly applied. Practically all the more than 2,000 defendants currently on death row are poor; many have received less than competent defense counsel at trial, particularly in states that rely on court-appointed private attorneys, who may have little criminal litigation experience, instead of seasoned public defenders. There is also much evidence that the system is racially biased, with regard to not just the race of the defendants but also the race of the victims. Blacks are disproportionately represented on death row, as they are in the larger prison population. More striking, however, are the racial disparities among victims in capital cases: most of them were white. Of the 231 victims whose convicted killers have been executed since the death penalty was reinstated, 194 were white.

It's difficult to predict how supporters of capital punishment would react to statistics like this if they were publicized, say, on *Oprah Winfrey*. Some might lose faith in the system; others might question the reliability of the statistics or dismiss their implications. The Supreme Court has held that the greater statistical likelihood of being sentenced to death for killing a white person "does not demonstrate a constitutionally significant risk of racial bias."

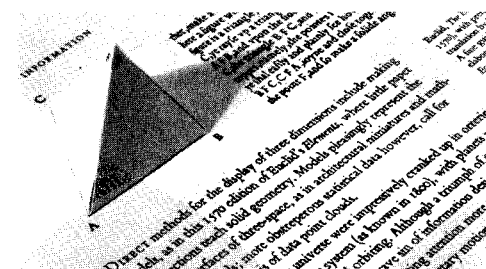
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Support for capital punishment requires leaps of faith like this—a willingness to believe, in spite of the evidence, that the system is fair or, at least, can readily be made fair. In Massachusetts, Governor William Weld, seeking to enact a death-penalty bill, has answered charges of racial bias in the criminal-justice system by promising to eliminate it, which is a little like justifying abortion prohibitions by promising to eliminate sex. Radelet, Bedau, and Putnam do not believe that errors in the system can be significantly reduced, partly because the human beings administering the system are fallible; so they advocate reducing the risk of error by eliminating capital punishment instead.

Would this eliminate deterrence as well? It might in a rational world—a world in which criminals carefully considered the consequences of their actions, keeping their emotions, not to mention their psychoses, under control. But in this world the assertion that the death penalty deters murder is not supported by the evidence, as the authors point out (and even Assistant Attorney General Markman conceded). In the absence of proof of the death penalty's deterrent effect, Governor Weld, for one, says that on the question of deterrence he is guided by his gut.

Debates about capital punishment usually come down to the viscera. Regardless of rational arguments about inequitable application or deterrent effect, the concept of capital punishment is deeply satisfying to many people who are, with good reason, fearful of crime and furious that it is out of control. That this fear and fury might be more productively directed against the widespread availability of guns does not make them less deserving of respect. Until opponents of capital punishment offer alternative ways of honoring legitimate demands that murders be avenged, they will be futilely contributing rational arguments to a highly irrational debate. Many people, after all, don't need to be persuaded that lawyers and courts can't be trusted. Many think the judicial system can't prosecute traffic tickets fairly, much less rapes and homicides, and in fact their anger at the system's breakdown fuels the demand for executions. There is a lot of cognitive dissonance in the capital-punishment debate: many people are eager to grant much power to a system in which they have little faith. □

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Brief Reviews



THE AMERICAN WAY OF BIRTH by Jessica Mitford. Dutton/William Abrahams, \$23.00. The acerbic irreverence that Ms. Mitford brought to bear on the shenanigans of undertakers in *The American Way of Death* cannot be appropriately applied to the pain and expense endured by living women contending with gynecologists and hospitals, and the author has not attempted to do so. She has confined herself to facts, some regrettable, many encouraging, none of them new. Only a reader who has managed to pass the last twenty years without noticing any of the many news stories about obstetrical practices and developments will find this thorough, capably written, and woefully belated report rewarding reading.

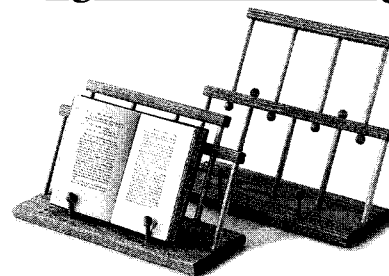
THE NAMES OF THE LOST by Liza Wieland. Southern Methodist University, \$19.95. The background of Ms. Wieland's novel is Atlanta during the terrible summer in which black children were being inexplicably murdered. The murders remain largely offstage, for the book's principal characters are white teenagers concerned about the killings because they have themselves lost loved ones to death or desertion and can appreciate the grief of the bereaved families. The young people are haunted by the voices of the past and weighed down by their recognition of the ephemeral nature of the present, and their interactions as they adjust to their precocious understanding form a quiet, sad, sometimes appealingly lyrical tale.

IN MY PLACE by Charlayne Hunter-Gault. Farrar Straus & Giroux, \$19.00. Ms. Hunter-Gault, now a well-known television correspondent, was one of the two black students whose entrance to the University of Georgia in 1961 desegregated that institution—with much national attention and local uproar. Her

graceful and unpretentious memoir, however, is concerned less with that civil-rights triumph than with what it was like to grow up as the daughter of a distinguished dynasty of preachers in a generally self-sufficient minority community. The Hunters were not poor—her father was an Army chaplain—and unpleasant collisions with neighboring whites were either unknown or have been omitted. The brick-throwing that greeted the author at the university is described without rancor, as her commitment to the cause of civil rights is described without heat. One learns about segregated schools (poor equipment, dedicated teachers), visits to farming relatives with lavish tables, prom dresses, and Ms. Hunter-Gault's early addiction to journalism by way of the *Brenda Starr* comic strip. Most of these amiable recollections—including the compulsory home-economics class in which she learned “how to make white sauce”—parallel white experience. Perhaps the implication of similarity was precisely Ms. Hunter-Gault's intention. It is only in the book's final chapter, containing her address to the graduating class of 1988 at the University of Georgia, that she speaks bluntly of the need for “acknowledging the guiding principles of fundamental human decency and then living by them” in “a waiting and needful world.”

AMERICAN GOTHIC by Gene Smith. Simon & Schuster, \$23.00. Edwin Booth is remembered as the greatest American actor of the nineteenth century, while his brother John is remembered as the man who shot Abraham Lincoln. They were not the only Booths. Their English-born father, Junius, was also a highly successful player. There were siblings of a certain eccentricity. The whole family, in fact, seems to have been a trifle mad, although usually on moderate points like vegetarianism, drunkenness, melancholia, and bigamy. Junius got merrily tipsy with Edgar Allen Poe and Sam Houston. Edwin once summoned a clergyman and kept him up half the night trying to arrange a funeral service for a basket of passenger pigeons from a neighboring market. John, handsome, cheerful, gregarious, and well regarded in the family profession, was considered the sanest member of his erratic tribe. Mr. Smith has no hope of explaining John's resort to murder. Perhaps it was the same confusion

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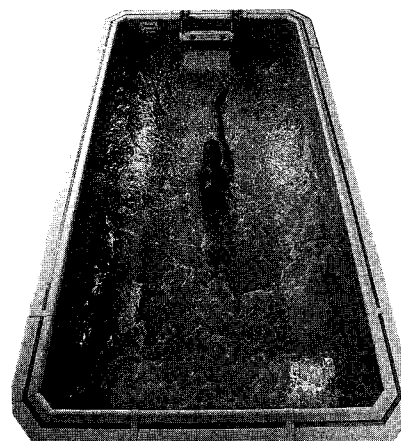
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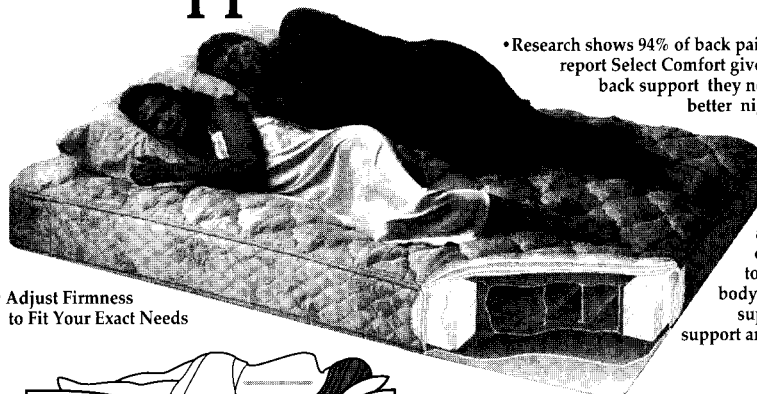
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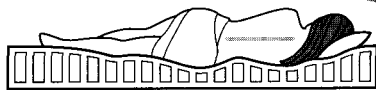
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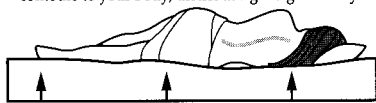
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between stage events and real life that led Junius, after a performance of *Othello*, to attack his Iago, a friend of long standing, with an andiron. (Iago bashed him on the nose.) Mr. Smith has collected much unusual detail about those talented but peculiar people and their times. His account of John Booth's flight after the assassination becomes a small escape thriller, and if his style sometimes tilts toward the melodramatic, his subjects warrant it.

THE VERY RICH HOURS by Emily Hiestand. *Beacon*, \$20.00. Ms. Hiestand recounts her travels in Greece, Orkney, the Everglades, and Belize with perceptive attention to history, current social conditions, and ecology. She does not ignore the traditional pleasure of seeing strange landscapes, which she describes with exceptional skill, and unfamiliar wildlife. "The heron's hunting dance is a hypnotic, snake-necked swaying after prey, then a lunge: crayfish in pincer bill, it crunches down and swallows whole, the telltale lump in its throat. . . . each step is a slow-motion marvel: three finger-like toes slowly retract, pulling up and together; the leg bends; step; the toes spread over a mat of leaves stealthily as thieves caressing jade plates." This elegant vignette was observed from aboard a boat grounded on an Everglades shoal out of radio range for distress signals, proving that Ms. Hiestand is a truly good traveler—she enjoys the unexpected.

CAFÉ BERLIN by Harold Nebenzal. *Overlook*, \$22.95. The first-person narrator of Mr. Nebenzal's novel is Daniel Saporita, a multilingual Sephardic Jew who is lurking in a Berlin attic in 1943. He has been there for close to two years, thanks to the loyalty of a German friend and former employee of Saporita's fashionable nightclub. How the son of a respectable spice merchant in Damascus came to be the proprietor of a raffish café catering to an extremely raffish clientele is a story that combines the picaresque with the spy thriller, the idyllic with the decadent, and does it very well.

THE WORLD BOOK by Steven Cramer. *Copper Beech Press*, \$9.95. The author of this collection of poems is the assistant poetry editor of *The Atlantic*.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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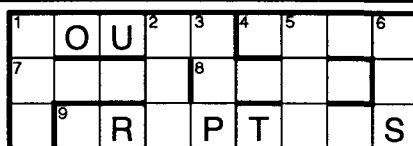
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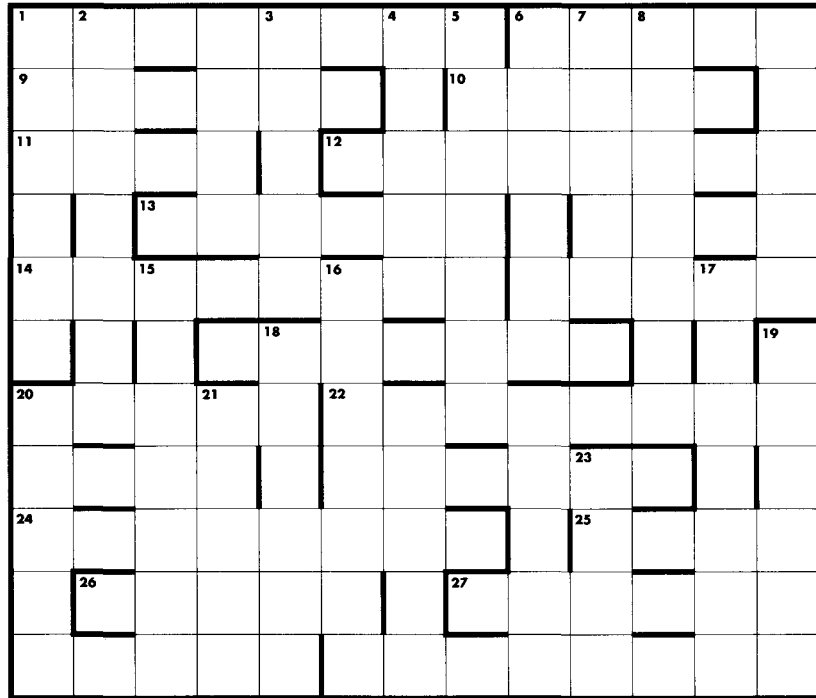
THE PUZZLER

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WRAP SESSION

Each clue a–l defines two words, one of which must have its wrapping (first and last letters) removed to produce the other. For example, the clue “Saying a dog’s name (7,5)” would lead to the answers PROVERB and ROVER. (Either the longer or the shorter word may be defined first in the clue.) The 12 unwrapped words are to be entered in the diagram, with Acrosses and Downs serving as guides. But don’t throw away those 24 wrapping letters; reuse them, one per blank below, to work out a cryptic clue for the diagram’s central entry. Beneath each blank is the label of the clue (a–l) from which a wrapping letter is taken. Diagram entries include 8 proper nouns and a foreign word.

See page 133 for Puzzler contest details. The solution to last month’s Puzzler appears on page 149.



b f e g d e h i a k b l d j k l c g a i f c h j

WRAPPED & UNWRAPPED

- a. Arab country (7,5)
- b. Flemish town tree (7,5)
- c. Protectively cover a tract of wasteland (7,5)
- d. Most oppressive period of Reaganism (10,8)
- e. Associate term of beginners? (7,5)
- f. Not disposed to favor a bug (6,4)
- g. Right line (6,4)
- h. What a speechmaker gives proportion (7,5)
- i. Flower of the Orient (7,5)
- j. Measure of a current meddler (8,6)
- k. Immortal gas supplier (7,5)
- l. Fluff part of a column (6,4)

ACROSS

- 1. Designers foul place in front of registers (8)
- 9. Talks about a means of restraint (6)

- 10. Verse including Roethke’s first preface (5)
- 11. Bit of oil flowed in Algerian port (4)
- 12. Skinniest bum lies in men’s group (8)
- 13. Agitates about a flight? (6)
- 14. Kitty returned part of Stacy’s supper (8)
- 20. French darling is nouveau riche? (5)
- 22. Certain about ring, child is regarding part of the ear (8)
- 24. Canadian traveling on a train (8)
- 25. Sent back one new month’s magazine (4)
- 26. French painter’s pigment applied (5)
- 27. Hot sweet bread with the middle cut out (6)

DOWN

- 1. After school, pens news stories (6)

- 2. By speaking, made a cast (7)
- 3. Popular ballad’s decorative section (5)
- 4. Thanks, having to wander earth (5)
- 5. Jerky resort with incomplete staff (7)
- 6. Roused a Rhode Island senator (6)
- 7. Fly circles head of lady under the sun (5)
- 8. Young Gene ate bananas (7)
- 15. Rod rearranged “Respect” (7)
- 16. British miler swallowing murderer’s drug (7)
- 17. Peg taking shower with apprentice (7)
- 18. Class in back with explosives (6)
- 19. Building remains beneath black bears (6)
- 21. Where a den accommodates a novelist (5)
- 23. Cheer word’s fundamental part (4)

NOTE: The instructions above are for this month’s puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

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GRANTA

WORD WATCH

BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

garage hopping *noun, slang*, burglaries perpetrated by teenagers who rove from neighborhood to neighborhood, stealing from suburban garages whatever is readily portable and marketable: "Authorities . . . fear . . . there will be even more 'garage hopping,' as the burglaries are called" (*Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: *Garage hopping*—a spinoff of terms like *bar-hopping* and *job-hopping*—is most prevalent in late spring and summer, when teenagers have more free time. *Garage hoppers* work in various ways. Groups of teenagers may scope out neighborhoods, looking for unlocked garages. They may also check for unlocked cars in driveways, and, finding them, use the remote-control garage-door openers inside to gain entry. Or they may cruise neighborhoods with the remote-control openers from their own garages, using them to open as many garage doors as possible—an alarmingly effective approach where old, less sophisticated systems are concerned. *Garage hoppers* may hit four or more garages in a day. Popular targets of theft include garden tools, expensive sunglasses, car radios, bicycles, beer, and stray cash.

Here are a few of the words being tracked by the editors of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition (Houghton Mifflin). A new word that exhibits sustained use may eventually make its way into a future edition of the dictionary. The information below represents preliminary research.

Iraqi manicure *noun, slang*, removal of a prisoner's fingernails and often toenails by members of the Mukhabarat, the security police of Iraq, headed by Qusay Saddam Hussein, a son of the chief of state: "An 'Iraqi manicure' is customarily administered in the dungeons of mild-mannered Qusay's security forces" (*Vanity Fair*).

BACKGROUND: In the "sanctions-era free market," or black market, that has thrived in Iraq since the Gulf War, food prices are as much as sixty times as high as normal, spare parts of all kinds are in acute demand, and opportunities are rife for anyone with access to import routes from Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. Although they may focus on expensive luxury items, such as whiskey and fine clothing, smugglers also arrive home with rice, sugar, wheat, and other staples for the government's warehouses. Their cooperation is said to be fostered by fears of an *Iraqi manicure* (or *pedicure*) should they decline. The commodities thus obtained enable the government to distribute some 1,300 calories' worth of food per

person per day, and hence are vital to the continued stability of the regime. *Iraqi manicure* joins a host of other sinister geo-eponymous euphemisms, including *Colombian roulette* (the smugglers' practice of ingesting small bags of cocaine before leaving one country and excreting them after arriving in another—a life-threatening proposition, because the bags sometimes break in transit), *French connection*, *Italian football* (a thrown bomb), *Russian roulette*, and *Spanish windlass* (a straitjacket for restraining a prisoner).

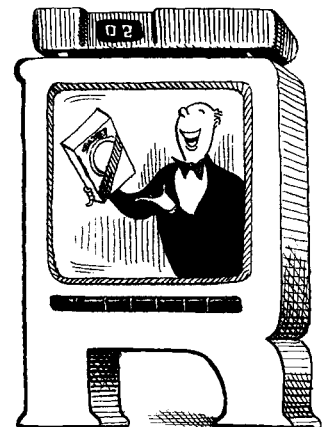
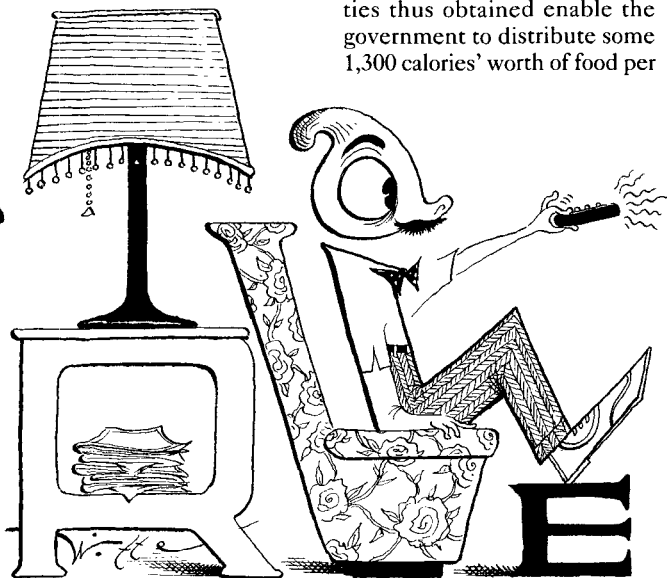
mudwalking *noun*, the sport of trekking across muddy tidal flats, or *wadden*, on the North Sea coast of the Netherlands: "Over the past 25 years, *mudwalking*—*wadlopen*—has become a popular pastime in the northern province of Friesland. While the Swiss scale the Alps and the Norwegians crisscross their mountain ranges on skis, the Dutch are busy walking in the *wad*" (*Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: *Mudwalking*, also dubbed *horizontal mountain climbing*, typically involves hiking some eight to ten miles from the mainland to one of several offshore islands, across the area left bare by the ebb tide. The terrain ranges from firm sand to knee-deep sludge to channels of seawater through which hikers must wade or swim. Guided tours are offered from July through September; these are restricted to 140 participants per outing and may be filled to capacity months in advance. The guides may identify local wildlife and demonstrate various *mudwalking* techniques, such as tiptoeing, "skating," and simply taking long—and sinking—strides.

They must also shepherd their charges past quicksand pits and ensure that everyone vacates the flats before the tide turns. Why do *mudwalkers* do it? Enthusiasts cite the novelty of the sport, its challenge, and the opportunity it affords—rare in the near-antiseptic Netherlands—to indulge left-over childhood desires to play in the mud.

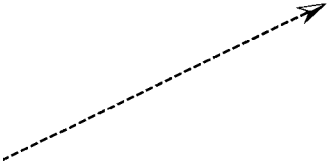
trawler *noun*, a television viewer who uses a remote control to flip from broadcast to broadcast, sampling many programs but settling on few or none. Also called *channel surfer*. "Trawlers. One of the most-feared new phenomena in broadcasting" (*Columbia Journalism Review*).

BACKGROUND: Viewers with remote controls can now *trawl* or *surf* through forty or more channels on commercial and cable networks, pausing only briefly, in an effort to avoid advertisements or boring shows. Their impatience poses obvious problems for marketers. It also has dismaying implications with respect to public awareness of social and policy issues: some question whether viewers accustomed to *trawling* for constant entertainment will be inclined to focus their attention on programs addressing such weighty matters as the economy, homelessness, violence, and health care.





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